







CONFUCIUS

IN A TAIL-COAT



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A SHANGHAI "TAXI GIRL."

# CONFUCIUS IN A TAIL-COAT

ANCIENT CHINA IN MODERN COSTUME

BY  
MAURICE DEKOBRA

TRANSLATED FROM  
"CONFUCIUS EN PULL-OVER"  
BY METCALFE WOOD

*ILLUSTRATED*

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# INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

JUST as every tourist visiting Soviet Russia comes home with feelings of enthusiasm or disgust, according to whether his political opinions are in sympathy or are antagonistic towards Communism, so the tourist from China looks upon this huge country as either delightful or detestable.

One has known sympathetic observers steeped in socialism, devoted disciples of the League of Nations, who exclaim with tears in their voices:

“Ah! Poor China, the victim of European Imperialism! . . . Ah! that splendid Kuomintang struggling under the sly menace of Japan!”

Whilst other critics, unmoved by the charm of Miss Snow and her guitar, unaffected by the poetry of old Peking, avow with no less sincerity:

“Ah! China! It is a filthy country, seething with anarchy, corruption and cruelty. . . .”

Where lies the truth? An old philosopher who lived in the time of the Emperor Chien Long said that it lies in the middle of the bar of a balance, placed at equal distances from the

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two ends. Now turn to Monsieur Louis Laloy. His "Mirror of China" is a prose poem, a dithyramb, extremely well written, but it gives a very surprising impression to anyone who has ever lived there. Everything is charming, delicate, precious and attractive. One might imagine oneself in the Trianon. The author has never seen a Chinaman raise his hand in the street! His servant is absolutely honest, etc. Happy Monsieur Louis Laloy who, in his love for the country of Tu Fu, has only looked at it through the rose-coloured spectacles of resolute optimism.

Without impugning the Chinese, one is bound to admit that, in their prodigious country, one comes across both the best and the worst; praiseworthy virtues and indescribable vices; noble actions and frightful tortures. Bribery and corruption rub shoulders with self-sacrifice and generosity. The man who watches with indifference the torture of one of his acquaintances may have the love of a father for his favourite bird. The scholar who unconcernedly belches and spits in front of you will prove himself, during the evening, to be the most refined of poets.

Consequently when one reads "Ways that are Dark," by Ralph Townsend, one studies the map of China with dark-coloured spectacles. This American, who was Consul in China and had difficulties with the authorities, deals with it ruthlessly.

## *Introduction*

In short, one can sum up the people who study China as follows:

Missionaries

Merchants

Diplomats.

None of these critics is impartial in describing what he has seen and heard. The missionary is not able to speak the truth owing to the frequent failure of his efforts and the self-satisfaction of his doctrines. The business man because his products may have been boycotted and his enterprises thwarted. The diplomat is still less to be relied upon. So long as he is in active service, his position prevents him from saying exactly what he thinks—at least in public.

There remains the professional correspondent—a Government official on holiday, a writer or a journalist. He has the advantage of being independent and able to speak his mind. But he has the disadvantage of taking too rapid a survey. Six months in China. It is like trying to give a true picture of Paris life after a visit of six hours. However, the objection is not so serious, because one has known bankers and Government officials who, after having lived twenty-five years in China, know less about the country than a trained correspondent who is accustomed to take in the picturesque beauties of

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the country and its interesting nature customs at a glance.

But to return to Mr. Townsend's dark outlook. His opinion of the Nankin Government is very clear and concise. It would make the good gentlemen at Geneva tremble as they listen with childish belief to the harangues *pro domo sua* of the representatives of Mr. Wang Ching Wei and the pernicious advice of European experts on China, gentlemen well paid by Nankin who have no interest to describe things as they are—on the contrary.

"It is absurd to suppose," says he, "that the Government of Nankin, which controls barely a tenth part of China, should be able to understand its essential needs, even if it wished to do so. As a matter of fact, it does little more than try to create the impression on the foreigner that it has great influence."

The criticism is severe. The young Republic is a huge, obstreperous and tiresome baby suffering from measles and teething and is peevish and keeps crying in its cradle at Kuomintang.

If one were interested in it, one would want to correct it. It stamps with rage at seeing its European uncles installed in a corner of its nursery.

And this Kuomintang on which the sun shines on the blue of its flag! What a deluded and optimistic people it represents, people who in

## *Introduction*

fifteen years expect to transform into honest republicans three hundred and ninety-nine millions of uneducated, good-natured, superstitious and conservative Chinese. One can forgive Kuomintang much because it hopes for much. It has reckoned without the politicians and the generals who exploit this poor patriarchal and feudal China hurled suddenly from mediæval times into the social ideas of young political scientists or graduates of Princetown University.

One of the favourite remarks of those long resident in China is:

"Don't talk about the Chinese. . . . You don't know the real Chinaman."

It is obvious that to try to sum up the Chinese psychology in a few hundred pages is as impossible as trying to put the theory of gravitation into a sonnet. There are two ways of studying the real Chinese. One is to read five hundred volumes written by innumerable Europeans who have visited China; the other is by living for at least thirty years entirely with Chinese who have not flavoured Confucius with the sauce of Freud, who have never heard of Havelock Ellis and who do not worship Engels and Marx as new idols of the Western world.

If one were to enumerate the good qualities and the defects of the real Chinese, according to

## *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

authors who have written about them during the last two centuries, one would get a table something like this:

<i>Good Qualities</i>	<i>Defects</i>
Filial affection.	Heartlessness.
Ancestor worship.	Indifference to the suffering of one's neighbours.
Good faith (between Chinese).	Political corruption.
Joviality.	Love of "squeezing."
Thrift.	Dirtiness.
Industry (especially amongst the peasants).	Lying.
Stoicism (indifference to comfort).	Lack of public spirit.

The Chinese have also a peculiarity which is at the same time a good quality and a defect—Face.

To save one's face, to lose face. . . . These are the two extremes of the Chinese conscience. . . . The European has a thicker skin than the Chinese when it is a matter of "face." Is it scepticism on his part? Or can one attribute it to a less theatrical conception of collectivism? Whatever it is, the Western mind attaches little or no importance to questions of face. To keep his face the Chinaman will kill himself without hesitation. In dealing with him the European, if he does not wish to upset his Chinese partner, must above everything respect his "face."

And this brings us to xenophobia that in-



LONG BEFORE THE AMERICANS, THE  
CHINESE MERCHANTS USED A CALCULATING  
MACHINE.



## *Introduction*

numerable commentators on the Chinese mind treat as a defect. In that they are wrong. It is perfectly legitimate and justifiable. We ourselves have always been, and will for a long time remain, in their eyes, "red-haired devils,"<sup>1</sup> that is to say, people incapable of speaking their wonderful language, understanding their poetry, appreciating their high code of morality without religion and incapable of dressing our women modestly.

For we must not be led away by the prestige that our mechanical inventions give us in the eyes of a few well-informed people in Hong Kong or Shanghai. To four hundred million citizens of the Yellow Republic, the motor-car, electricity, wireless and the gramophone are the performances of clever conjurers, and only deserve their condescension or their contempt. Europeans have tried for a century to colonize China, or at any rate to make it a customer willing to purchase their manufactured goods. The Chinaman resisted this attempt for eighty years and has only just begun to be tempted by electric lamps, Japanese clocks, German tools, French perfumes and American cigarettes. Between that and a friendly or even tolerant attitude towards us there is a wide chasm. And the Chinaman is right in not bridging it, because the

<sup>1</sup> A name originally given to the Dutch navigators who sailed to the China Sea in days of the Ming Dynasty.

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

egotistical aims of European traders, knocking at Chinese doors, deserve neither recognition nor respect.

The educated Chinese have supreme contempt for a European factory hand bending over a machine turning out three thousand pairs of slippers an hour. Who dares to say that he is wrong? The terrible mercantile attitude of the white races of Europe and America, is it an edifying example to the disciples of Confucius, whose moral code is worthy of our respect?

Are you astonished, therefore, when you read the anti-European and anti-Christian pamphlets that have for some years been distributed by Chinese propagandists! Here are some quotations:

“Christianity is the vanguard of Imperial invasion. One must fight against it at all costs.”

“The Cross of Christ is the implement they use to crush the Chinese.”

“All those who sympathize with the Christians are traitors to the yellow race (warning to missionaries).”

“The aim of Christian teaching is to encourage slavery, destroy the foundations of our social life and to poison the minds of our youth. We must suppress Christian schools.”

“Our anti-Christian movement is part of our national revolution. If we succeed, the first line

## *Introduction*

of defence of the Imperialists will have been pierced! ”

It is right that one should know this in Europe. Ignorance and illusion are the most serious obstacles to good relations between races.

For our ignorance of the Chinese is only equalled by the indifference of a Sze-chuen peasant to European affairs. A lady, quite recently, asked me if Confucius was a tree which grew in China. She would have taken the Piræus for a mandarin and Lao-tzeu for the microbe of sleeping sickness.

However, what interesting details, what instructive facts we unearth if we inquire a little more closely into the life of the Far East.

How is it that we are unaware of the perfection to which Chinese doctors have brought acupuncture, and we do not know that they differentiate twenty-four separate pulses in the human body. But this does not prevent them, in the interior of the country, when paying their professional visits to patients of the weaker sex, from bringing an ivory statuette representing a naked woman. The doctor is consequently not obliged to see his patient undressed, for he asks her to point out on the statuette the exact place where the pain is.

Why do we believe that the rickshaw-coolies are as foul-mouthed as taxi-drivers, seeing that

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the coolie, when he pushes his vehicle into the place of another close to the pavement, does not call out to his colleague: "Get out of the way there, you ——!" but asks him politely: "Can I borrow your light?"

When you meet a Chinese peasant, if you are not a soldier—the terror of the populace—his greeting will be cordial. He will soon ask you: "How old are you?"

You will reply to him that you were born in the year of the rat or the tiger or the dragon or the horse, etc. And the inquirer, after a short mental calculation, will tell you your exact age. He will only be in danger of making an error of twelve years, the duration of a cycle.

One could mention innumerable examples of this description. Between ourselves and the Chinese there are as many points in common as between an inhabitant of the Earth and a Martian.

All students of Chinese affairs have been asked the question:

"What is going to happen in the Far East?"

And every one makes a prophecy. But to prophesy is to draw a bill on the future that is not honoured, or to throw a boomerang for which one has to wait an eternity for its return.

China is a huge cocktail shaken by a bar-tender who is as silent as the hero of "Outward Bound."

## *- Introduction*

The tragedy of the Pacific is only just beginning. The future conflict between China, Japan, the Soviet and America is simmering on a slow fire. France and England will take a hand in it to defend themselves, because they will get hard knocks owing to the patriotic zeal of the Japanese, the enmity of the Soviets, the intermittent fever of Chinese xenophobia and the economic ambition of the Americans. The Titanic struggle has just begun between the white proletariat who work leisurely for 7s. 6d. a day, and the yellow industrialist, who works ten hours at the selfsame machines for ninepence.

Gengis Khan with his innumerable arrows menaced the life of the Western peoples. The yellow races with their low wages and small needs are attacking the revenues of our shareholders. The natural conclusion of this grave struggle will please the armament manufacturers. And it will gainsay once more those who cherish illusions about man—that beast of prey.

M.D.



**PART I**  
**SHANGHAI**



## CHAPTER I

### CRICKET MATCHES

It was eleven o'clock in the evening. A keen north wind whistled through Whampoa, and muddy-looking waves beat against the large grey hulls of the cruisers at anchor.

My friend Liang, a Chinaman, polished as amber and more cultured than a mandarin of the old regime, was giving orders to his chauffeur:

"Turn to the east and take the second to the west."

In China one does not turn right or left, but east and west. The chauffeur pulled up in front of a high barricade on the Foochow Road, full of rickshaws. To get into a place near the footpath he knocked over a coolie who was in his way. Liang explained to me at last the object of our expedition:

"I am taking you to see the cricket matches."

We made our way into a cul-de-sac full of

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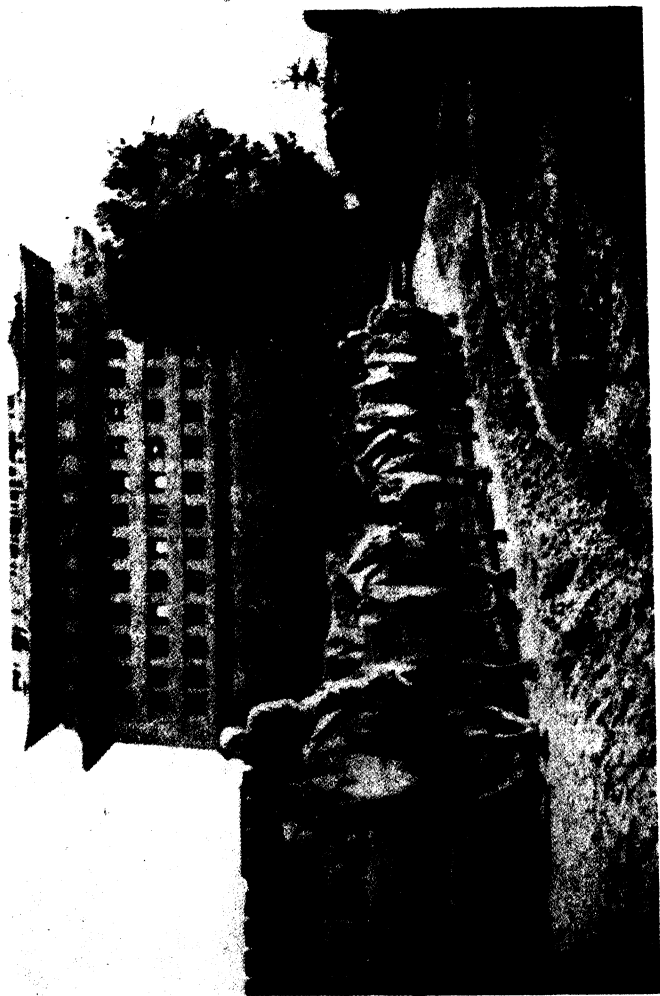
loafers and beggars. We passed a pretty, bare-headed girl in grey fur, haughty and unapproachable as an idol; she came out of a hovel to get into her newly varnished rickshaw. We turned to the west—at any rate it was not to the south—between two dirty walls, to walk along a passage still more dirty, in order to reach a broken-down hovel at the far end of which some rickshaw coolies were quarrelling. A Chinaman in a cardigan—maybe a trainer of crickets—took our overcoats and led us to the paddock, where some other Chinese were discussing the merits of their insects shut up in dainty little wooden cages. It suggested the Zoological Gardens in the Kingdom of Lilliput.

We were introduced to the owner of the *Yellow Dragon*, the champion cricket, and the trainer of *The Terror of the Enemy*, another cricket cunning as a fox, if one may make the comparison.

The proprietor of the strange gaming-house came to bid us welcome.

“You have struck lucky this evening. There are three thousand dollars on *Iron Claw* and *Death Defier* belonging to Messieurs Hsu and Li Tchang Yuan. *Iron Claw* is a cricket from Kwang-tung, while *Death Defier* comes from Peking.”

“Northerner against Southerner, eh?” remarked my friend Liang. “The backers from



A CARAVAN OF CAMELS AT THE GATES OF PEKIN.



### *Cricket Matches*

Canton will put their money on *Iron Claw*, whilst the partisans of General Wan Fou Lin will stake their last cent on *Death Defier*."

We went into the arena—that is to say, a shabby room more like a hay-loft than a gaming-room. There were about fifty Chinese present, and a few Europeans. Two bookmakers took the bets and gave out little rose-tinted papers upon which were written the pedigrees of the combatants and also their odds.

"We Chinese adore sports. You can find at Shanghai a dog-racing track and a pelota court which are always well patronized."

"Not to mention the fact that you have a race-course in the middle of the town. Imagine Auteuil race-course between the Madeleine and the Trinity!"

"Idlers love games of chance. In fact, certain Chinese who cut off their pigtails let hair grow in the palms of their hands."

The sound of the gong announced the combat, which was preceded by the weighing in. *Iron Claw* and *Death Defier* went in turn into a little aluminium box hanging by three silk threads to a piece of bamboo as thin as a match. One learned that the Northern cricket weighed five carats more than his Southern adversary. There were arguments between the backers of Mr. Hsu's cricket and Mr. Li Tchang Yuan's cricket, whilst the two owners, in the recognized manner,

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excited their colts by tickling them with a tiny brush made of rat's fur.

The battle commenced. *Death Defier*, roused to fury by the clever method of tickling, rushed madly at *Iron Claw*, who, surprised at the attack, twisted round. There were shouts of "*Hao!*" (bravo) and joyous laughter from the Northerners. But the Southerners triumphed in their turn when *Iron Claw* gave his enemy a back-hander which would have delighted Raoul le Boucher. The fight went on.

Meanwhile Liang told me of the hoax that had been played upon Mr. Tchou Yu Tang, the owner of the place, by a practical joker from Hankow who had a grudge against him for some obscure but very strong reasons. This last-named man is a member of the Great Swords, whilst Mr. Tchou Yu Tang is a member of the Red Lances, two secret societies of which there are great numbers in China. But that is another story. Let us return to our crickets.

One evening our jester from Hankow brought a cricket named *Tiger's Tooth*, which was supposed to be the terror of his fellows in Hupeh. No one noticed that Monsieur Liou, the gentleman from Hankow, bet ten to one on his cricket's opponent, although *Tiger's Tooth*, his own cricket, was the great favourite in the match. The match began. The proprietor, Tchou Yu Tang, had put a thousand dollars on *Tiger's*

### *Cricket Matches*

*Tooth*, trusting in his friend Liou's tip. After some fencing and a few pats with their claws, how great was the astonishment of the players to see *Tiger's Tooth* allow himself to be gently embraced by his antagonist and remain immovable in the arena, displaying perfect contentment. One of the punters, watching the combatants, exclaimed with great indignation:

"Why, your cricket is a female!"

It was quite true. That jester Mr. Liou had camouflaged a female into a male. It was not a combat that Madame Cricket, this vamp of the insect world, sought with her adversary, but a passionate embrace that praying Mantis would have appreciated. Mr. Liou was hooted by the players. Mr. Tchou Yu Tang grabbed him by the ears and bit the skin of his bald head, whilst the disappointed bookmakers called the match off.

Liang had just finished his story when I noticed two Europeans who had come to the weighing-in room. I had never seen them before, neither at the Shanghai Club with the longest bar in the world nor at the French Sporting Club, where one dances the fox-trot on an elastic floor. Liang noticed my surprise.

"You want to know who these men are? That is quite simple. They are two of my friends. One is a Russian or rather a Caucasian,

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Prince Serge; I only know his Christian name. The other is a Frenchman. His name is Freddy Janval."

"Why Freddy?"

"Because he is an ex-bootlegger from New York. From Alfred he has changed his name to Freddy. The end of prohibition having killed his business in the States, he has come to China in order to exploit other prohibitions. The prince and he are two choice adventurers. They are not ashamed of it and do credit to the strange collection that the Shanghai Zoo has to offer to inquisitive folk. Come and have a whisky with them."

I followed Liang at once. The sportsmen continued to utter their guttural exclamations and their enthusiastic "*Hao's*" as they bent over the crickets' arena. *Death Defier* had just vanquished *Iron Claw*.

## CHAPTER II

### CONTRABAND IN ARMS

"CAN you describe Shanghai in a few words?" asked Prince Serge.

"It is an Asiatic cross-breed of a sky-scraper and a pagoda."

"Not so bad. . . . But I suggest a more cynical definition. Shanghai is a goitre in China's neck, in which Western plots ferment. As for me, I am one of the evil fermentations."

I protested on behalf of many French, English and American honest business men and scrupulous merchants who in seventy years have turned a fishing village, surrounded by marshes, into one of the most flourishing towns in the world.

The prince smiled indulgently. He is withal very handsome, and had no doubt looked very striking in his cadet's uniform. He offered me, with his delicate hand, a dish of dried melon seeds as he replied politely:

"Quite so! You are nearly right. The French concession in particular does honour to your country. One can almost say that since the

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clean sweep of the opium profiteers it has become a model of order and good behaviour. So much so that rich Chinese who are in danger of their lives, and generals and Ministers of State find a haven of security there. But there are, all the same, two adventurers in Shanghai at any rate, my friend Freddy Janval and myself! . . . No! Don't express astonishment for the sake of appearing polite. I have told you that I will recount to you my life. It consists of three epochs. The first epoch: exile, classic poverty—the life of a Russian nobleman as narrated in the novels of 1920 to 1925. Without a sou, I live on my title as others live by their diplomas. . . . Second epoch: like all the rest, I marry an American a year before the crash of November 11th, 1929. . . . Catastrophe. Dollars melt like the grease of *chachlik* in the fire. . . . Divorce. I return to France with remnants of a banking account. I live from hand to mouth. But teas at the Ritz are not worth a silver mine in Utah. I get stranded in Biarritz with some colleagues in the Russian aristocracy. . . . I become a super in a palace."

"A super?"

"Yes. . . . In a syndicate of friends I join the flotsam and jetsam of Gotha along with the grandees of Spain driven out of their castles. We are boarded and lodged in return for appearing at smart functions. Because—God be



MISS KOW SIN PENG AND MR. KOW  
CHEN FEI, CHINESE SCREEN STARS.



### *Contraband in Arms*

praised!—there are still plenty of snobs who wish to have the Grand Duke X or Prince Z as a guest at their dinner-parties.”

“But we are in China and you are talking of Biarritz!”

“Wait a minute; I am coming to the third epoch. One evening on the Basque Coast I met a pretty woman who was quite alone, a half-caste from Pondicherry, daughter of a Frenchman and an Indian. Conversation . . . meeting . . . sympathy . . . confidences. . . Nella tells me she has a rich friend and she is only momentarily free. I wonder what he can be: a rich merchant from Lyons? . . . She smiles and whispers:

“‘No. . . . A Chinese general.’”

“I am astonished. She gives me details. Allow me to keep silent as to the name of this brass hat of war . . . civil war. Another meeting with the beautiful half-caste. In my arms she forgets her yellow lover. Three weeks later she says to me: ‘Serge, you are wasting your life in Europe. You have nothing to look forward to here. . . . Do the same as Freddy!’ ‘Who is Freddy?’ ‘A Frenchman, a born rascal who made gold by selling bootleg brandy in New York and who now makes silver by trading in opium in China. . . . Can you get twelve thousand rifles cheap, a batch of a hundred and eighty machine-guns in decent condition, and a million rounds of ammunition

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

that more or less fit them? . . . If you can, there is a fortune waiting for you. The general is very anxious to please me, as I brought him a magnificent cuckoo clock from the Black Forest. It says "Cuckoo" at the hour, the half-hour and the quarters.'

"I need hardly tell you that Nella's suggestion gave me furiously to think. I had no rifles handy, but it is easier to procure twelve thousand rifles than to enrol twelve thousand heroes. A fortnight later I had an option upon the necessary arms and munitions. It was only a matter of waiting for a telegram and cheque to arrange for them to be dispatched from Trieste. Nella and I embarked at Marseilles on the *Felix-Roussel* of the Messageries Maritimes. We landed at Hong Kong, the Monte Carlo of Asia. She went straight to Canton, where she found her friend. I waited for three weeks, killing time between the Peak, golf at Repulse Bay and bridge at the club. At length an amah, Nella's faithful maid-servant, brought me a long letter in which my sweet partner explained: firstly, that the general had no confidence in this offer of arms as, in 1923, he had received fifty cases of breech-loading and other rifles with an assortment of ammunition comprising six-millimetre cartridges for saloon rifles, large and small sporting guns and a number of cartridge cases together with a handbook entitled 'The Perfect

### *Contraband in Arms*

Shot'; secondly, that the general had paid for the above thirty thousand dollars; thirdly, that his rage on receipt of them had brought on an attack of eczema; fourthly, that he agreed, however, to deal in order to please her, on condition that he received six sample rifles immediately and kept me as a hostage until the delivery was completed.

"And Nella ended her letter with this disturbing piece of advice:

"'If you are sure regarding the quality of your rifles, the deal is as good as made. If not, refuse, because you will be beheaded if there is any trickery or there are any faulty guns!'

"I had the samples sent by airplane, and I offered myself as hostage for my reliable client. I was, in all respects, very well treated by the general, who hiccoughed a great deal but was kind-hearted. The whole delivery was made outside the zone guarded by England. The general was satisfied. My head still remained on my shoulders. I paid half the amount of the commission cheque into Nella's bank at Hong Kong—I am Russian but honest—and I acquired from the Chinese military authorities a reputation as a reliable agent, brave and trustworthy."

I congratulated the prince on his courage. He munched a melon seed and concluded in his charming voice:

"Bah! To die, beheaded by a Chinaman in

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

Kwang-tung or to be run over in the Avenue Malakoff by a G-7 driven by a Russian chauffeur; do you see much difference? . . . I don't. In any case, after this fortunate occurrence I settled down in Shanghai, and at the present moment I am on the track of another ver-ry, ver-ry interesting piece of business."

"May I ask what it is?"

"This time the business is to supply tanks to the rebels in Fu-kien. . . . A little matter of eighty thousand dollars."

"Ah! Your general of former days has perhaps gone over to the enemies of Chiang Kai Chek?"

"No. My general is dead—assassinated. But he had an official wife who has sworn to take me from Nella. Her name is Madame Celestial Perfume. She speaks very good English and dances divinely. I am meeting her to-morrow. Will you come and have tea with us?"

"With pleasure. But why does Madame Celestial Perfume interest herself in the Fu-kien rebels?"

"It is rather a complicated matter. There is a personage who used to be one of the general's secret advisers who urged him to give up Nella—this foreign concubine—and pay exclusive attention to Madame Celestial Perfume. In falling back upon my good offices the widow has two objects in view: to put the rebels, her

### *Contraband in Arms*

friends, in touch with an agent who did not trick her first husband, and to get her own back on Nella by suggesting the following deal. Twelve tanks to be delivered in two months at Foochow on the understanding that I openly deceive Nella with her in forty-eight hours! You follow me? ”

“ Certainly. The difficulty is to get out of the dilemma. And the twelve tanks are the prize.”

“ It is not very easy, because Nella can put me in bad odour with the rebels’ chief of staff, who is in love with her, and if I fall for Madame Celestial Perfume, he will refuse my tanks.”

“ Ah, well! You’ll fix it up. You know how to manage that sort of situation.”

The prince flicked his cigarette ash on to the chewed melon seeds and replied modestly :

“ Oh, no! . . . I shall just tr-ry and dodge it; that’s all I can do.”

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

her temples, her cleanly cut profile slightly curved in the delicate Kwan-in manner, her sensual lips, her graceful movements, in her long, peacock-blue gown with military collar girdled with brown buckles, her beautifully shaped hands with their slow and studied movements, everything about her indicated the desire to please and also to cause suffering.

Watching her as she served tea, I pitied any naïve European who fell in love with her. Serge, who knew her well, told me a little about her past.

"You know . . . the coquettes of Hollywood are mere children compared with Isabella. . . . She has wrought havoc in all the Legations at Peking. . . . A Dutch planter from Java nearly committed suicide on her account. It would almost seem that she took a special delight in breaking European hearts. . . . Take note of what I have said."

"But you, Serge, aren't you afraid?"

"Me? Half an Asiatic with Tartar blood in my veins? . . . Don't you worry about me. . . . The ex-Mademoiselle Celestial Perfume will soon find out with whom she is dealing."

In fact, I realized half an hour later that the duel between the Chinese lady and the Russian had begun. Madame Isabella Pao Yu expressed her finest shades of thought in English worthy of Mr. Arnold Bennett and seemed to play with



WHEN A PEKIN GIRL SMILES.



### *The General's Widow*

Serge like a panther with a lamb. I ended by saying to her, bluntly :

"You do not like Europeans, madame? "

Her beautiful oblique eyes, like two beams of light in an ivory mask, gazed at me for an instant. Then she softened them as she replied in the sweetest possible voice :

"I adore them. . . . I hug them. . . ."

"In order to choke them! "

"Why should you expect us to like people who have settled themselves in our house without asking our permission? Are we cannibals from the New Hebrides, savages from Central Africa to be colonized willynilly? Five thousand years of civilization, doesn't that count for anything? Three thousand years of poetry, philosophy and art, do they mean nothing? Yes! It is shown by the unfair treaties: Hong Kong ceded to the English in 1842, Shanghai to foreign nations . . . and you have the audacity to call them *Concessions*! . . . The word plunder would be nearer the mark."

"Perhaps so, madame. . . . But the Western barbarians have brought progress, the railway, electricity and vaccines which have checked your epidemics."

"And quick-firing guns which mow down those whom the doctors have missed! Thanks. We do not want your progress. There are barely a million of us who dally with Western

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

ideas and science, and three hundred and ninety-nine millions who pay no attention to them. So I may be forgiven for not caring very much for you."

Serge, with his usual cynicism, cut in with:

"Except in your alcove, Isabella!"

She replied with quick repartee:

"My sweet! Do you remember Judith?"

"Oh! Oh! Don't flatter yourself. You have not yet decapitated one of your Western lovers."

She turned to me.

"Monsieur. . . . Has one always to decapitate a man to make him lose his head? . . . Yes, I promise you, so long as there are foreign cruisers at Whampoa and your soldiers on our soil I shall try and make the whites who fall into my arms suffer."

A servant in a black robe and a waistcoat of blue brocade came and whispered into Isabella's ear. She gave an order in Shanghai dialect.

He brought the telephone. She held the receiver in the tips of her fingers with supreme contempt, as she would have held a dead mouse by the tail, and said:

"Serge, dear . . . Nella wants you. . . . Will you speak to her?"

The prince did not seem in the least embarrassed. He spoke gaily into the instrument:

### *The General's Widow*

"Why yes, Nella, we are having tea with Isabella. . . . What? Dine with you? . . . But . . ."

He hesitated. Isabella looked at him as she scribbled on a scrap of paper merely the name of a Chinese province—*Fu-kien*. I gathered that translated into plain language it meant: "If you do not dine with me the tank deal will be off."

"Hallo!" said the prince. "Unfortunately I am engaged this evening. . . . What's that? You are dining with Sun Ya. . . . At the Cantonese restaurant in the Nankin road. Have a good time. . . ."

He listened for some time. Nella was evidently reproaching him, because every time he tried to speak the conversation continued through the receiver. The general's widow was becoming impatient. She got up, and without saying a word she extinguished her cigarette on Serge's neck. He nearly cried out. But keeping calm, he hung up the receiver, dabbed his burnt skin with his silk handkerchief, and the only vengeance he took was to kiss the dainty wrist of his torturer.

"My dear," she said, "I wanted to purify by fire the words that this cat was pouring into your ear. We will also go to dinner at Sun Ya's."

"But Nella . . ."

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

"She will be in the next compartment. If she comes out on to the balcony, she will be able to see us. . . . That will tickle her shark's fins."

The lady shook her jade bracelets, green as emeralds on her bare arms, and begged to be excused.

"Monsieur, please join us at ten o'clock. We shall expect you. . . . Forgive me. But Serge and I have some business to talk over. . . ."

A quarter of an hour later we were in the Avenue Joffre—Yoffalo as the coolies call it. The prince, his handkerchief to his neck, was swearing like a cabby.

"By all the saints in Christendom. . . . This viper of a woman has hurt me. I must go to a chemist. When I told you that Isabella was charming! She knows how to talk to men! . . . Anyway, if you come at ten o'clock, you will be able to gather up the remains of the ladies who will devour one another between the swallows' nests and the shrimp pancakes."

The prince bought the *Evening Post* and glanced through it as the chemist bathed his neck.

"Are you looking for the runners in the dog-races this evening?"

"No," he said with a grimace, for the burn was giving him pain. "I was looking to see if the Fu-kien rebels are still rebelling. In this

### *The General's Widow*

curious country revolutions last as long as rose blooms . . . or long enough to be able to sign a few fat cheques. Chinese politics have secrets that cannot be fathomed. You ought to explain to the people of the West the exact state of affairs in this huge and unfortunate republic that is the victim of perpetual civil war."



## CHAPTER IV

### THE YELLOW TAXI GIRLS

“As your appointment with the prince and the general’s widow is not until ten o’clock, let us go for a while to the Majestic,” suggested Liang. “You will see something that has not existed in China for more than seven years, and you will appreciate the choreographic talents of our women.”

The ballroom was full. On the first tier, the whole length of the room, a hundred taxi girls were seated two by two at their little tables. These Manons, with their eyes half shut, black curls on their necks, were patiently waiting until the gentlemen in jackets or silk tunics rushed for them at the first bars of the fox-trot—tariff, thirty cents. Almost all slim and *svelte*, very elegant in their long gowns with stiff collars. Many of them were pretty. They danced with distinction and grace, and showed by their divided skirts well-shaped legs and dainty ankles.

“Dance with them and you will think you are

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

dancing with a will-o'-the-wisp," said Liang, who had just escorted his partner, Miss Lotus Flower, to her place. . . . "I can recommend Miss Supreme Happiness and Miss Dragon Pearl. The last one has two gold teeth which give her, when she smiles, the appearance of a dummy in an American dentist's show-case."

"Are they a little light in their behaviour—these ladies?"

"Not at all. Naturally they are not the *ingénues* of Shanghai; but most of them live honestly by their profession, which is as good as any other. . . . Look over there at those twins dressed in peach flowered brocade. They are very popular, for they dance divinely. And anyway, Miss Lute-Under-the-Moon and Miss Who-Represents-Springtime each make six hundred dollars a month. It is worth much less to remain pure. They are engaged to young students at the Aurora University."

"If it were necessary to classify Chinese women of to-day, one might divide them as follows:

"First. The peasant from the interior who lives in exactly the same way as her ancestors in the Ming Dynasty, wearing black trousers and a blue cotton vest, her hair like a halo on her forehead, her black velvet bandeau and her superstitions unchanged.

"Second. The town-bred girl, the easy-going



MISS PAPILLON HOU, THE MOST CELEBRATED  
STAR OF THE CHINESE SCREEN.



## *The Yellow Taxi Girls*

middle-class woman of the large cities who shares the affection of her husband with several concubines, according to the immemorial custom, but has a wireless set, knows how to write and read the *Sin Wan Pao* or the *Shun Pao*, or if not, at any rate a page of the Shanghai newspaper.

"Third. The woman of the world now emancipated after twenty years of revolution, and married to a Chinaman, modern to all outward appearances—a high official, a banker, or an important merchant. She wears her Parisian dresses, furs and jade jewels as though to the manner born. She speaks excellent English, occasionally French, reads H. G. Wells and Sinclair Lewis; she is sometimes converted to Christianity and calls herself Hilda or Jeanne; she does not tolerate concubines, is a member of the Chinese Women's Club and often eats with a knife and fork. As to her feet, they are, of course, of normal size."

"What you say is true. But do not forget the youngest members of the Republic, followers of Kuomintang. . . . I mean the women students. They are the most advanced class of Chinese femininity. You will come across them in Peking and they are very up-to-date. Sometimes they wear European dress, believe in free love, have a contempt for marriage vows, play basket-ball and badminton and quote Freud quite freely. But to return to the taxi girls who are dancing here;

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

it is certain that if in 1920 anyone had said to an old Chinaman that in ten years' time he would see his daughter dancing the blues or Viennese waltzes not only with foreign devils, but with her own countrymen, he would have laughed in your face and advised you to go and consult a mental specialist. Remember that twenty-five years ago a Chinaman who was your best friend would hardly have allowed you to see his wife, his daughter or his sister. To-day you dance with them . . . at any rate in the large towns which are in direct contact with Europeans, for naturally in the provinces nothing has changed."

"To what do you attribute this sudden development?"

"To the American cinema amongst other things. A certain number of Chinese have acquired the custom of kissing and dancing owing to the screen. But bear in mind that one must always limit this new outlook to a very small number of Chinese women—perhaps ten thousand out of two hundred million! We were talking just now of the tiny boots that you rarely see in the Concessions. The authorities of Shan-tung, for example, are obliged to take steps to try and put an end to this deplorable practice. General Han Fou Tchou was recently asked to threaten young girls who persisted in cramping their feet that they would not be allowed to

### *The Yellow Taxi Girls*

marry! On the other hand, you had, the other evening, at a charity ball patronized by Mr. H. H. Kung, Minister of Finance to the Government of Nankin, a spectacle which astonished the older foreign residents at Shanghai—Chinese ladies of the best society appearing in historical costumes representing past heroines, or in Chinese dresses designed by Miss Helen Tsang, the most advanced of the emancipated set, the daughter of one of the leaders of the revolution, a great friend of Sun Yat Sen, who sacrificed his entire fortune to the good cause.”

“With such examples one might be tempted to sum up the Chinese girl as an American in taste who dances in a palæontological museum! But that would not be strictly true, for one cannot draw general conclusions from exceptional cases.”

Liang took out his watch.

“It is after ten o’clock! We ought to join our friends at Sun Ya’s.”

Ten minutes later we mounted the stairs to the first floor of a Cantonese restaurant, where one dines in small rooms divided by partitions the height of a man. In the passages several waiters were going backwards and forwards with warm serviettes with which they soothed the faces of apoplectic diners. Others were carrying covered trays with those little dishes which add to the

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

charm of a Chinese meal. We heard shouts and raucous calls one after the other, as if people were being injured. Liang reassured me:

“No, it is not our friends quarrelling. . . . It is merely customers who are playing *Houa K'iuén*. . . . You can hear them calling out: ‘*San K'eu! Pâ K'eu! . . . Liou K'eu! . . .*’ (Three! Eight! Six!) The point is, in putting up the fingers of the right hand, to know the exact number of fingers put up by the other two partners. When one knows how to *Kampé* and play *Houa K'iuén* properly, one is a welcome guest.”

“But where are our friends? Nella the Topazine ought to be here also. Let us hope that nothing untoward has happened and that an ambulance has not taken the prince and the general's widow to the hospital!”

Liang asked the waiter. He learnt that our friends had suddenly gone away and that Serge had left an envelope addressed to us. We read the contents written in pencil on the back of a Chinese menu:

*“What I have expected for a long time has happened. After the bombardment of Foochow by airplanes from Nankin, the zeal of the rebels of Fu-kien has abated. The generals are about to take French leave. That, at any rate, is what a reliable messenger has just now informed the*

### *The Yellow Taxi Girls*

*astonished Madame Pao Yu. My tanks are for the moment a wash-out. The rivalry of these ladies has no raison d'être for the time being. They have Kampé-d and we have all decided to go with the messenger, who is taking us to the house of the sing-song girl of a general to talk matters over. Take my car, which is outside, because you would never find the address."*

Liang looked at me smilingly. He enjoyed my astonishment.

"You are not yet very accustomed to Chinese ways. You expected to find one of these ladies waving the scalp of her rival, but instead they have been drinking together the habitual hot wine. You thought that the *Fu-kien rebels* were about to undermine the authority of Chang Kai Chek, but instead bombs (together with several hundred thousand dollars) have worked miracles. I'll bet that you are wondering how the prince will get out of his difficulty? You will find that he has already another client in view for his twelve tanks. . . . But let us go and join them. These people here do not interest me so much as the general who wants to talk business at the house of his sing-song girl."

We went out of the restaurant and found Serge's car in the Nankin road. Liang asked the chauffeur:

"Do you know where to take us? "

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

He replied at great length in Shanghai dialect. My friend explained to me:

"The chauffeur, who opened his heart after I wished him *Kun Hsi Fah Tsai* (a happy New Year) with five dollars, has told me some curious facts about the general from *Fu-kien*. He knew him in 1930, brigadier-general in Yen Si Chan's army at Shan-tung when the latter revolted against Nankin. This emissary is called Ho Ying Sung. He is an old *Mafou*, a plucky goon who did not value human life more than the stump of a cigar. His entry into the trio Nella-Isabella-Serge completes one of these amazing associations that burst up at the slightest provocation. . . ."

The car stopped.

"Are we there already?"

"No. The chauffeur is going to escort us through the maze of streets."

We made our way into a blind alley lit by white lamps marked with Chinese characters, like large luminous aspirin cachets. Shadowy figures whispered behind half-opened doors. An old gramophone screeched out the homesick wails of a Soochow song.

## CHAPTER V

### THE FAVOURITE'S WARDROBE

GENERAL HO YING SUN's favourite sing-song girl lived on the second floor looking out on to a glass-roofed courtyard. Between the balconies various articles of clothing were drying on lines. The staircase was crowded with amahs in trousers, unemployed Chinese and babies with their fringed hair who should have been in bed at this late hour.

Our friends were in a room with white walls furnished with a black chest of drawers, a large white bed and a wardrobe with a false back. The use of this will be understood later.

We were introduced to the general. His head shaved, wrinkled eyes, sensual lips, hands of a strangler and a heavenly smile. In fact, a charming man in a black robe and a sea-blue silk coat. He spoke picturesque English with a Belgian accent, interpolating a German word or two every now and then.

We heard violent spitting behind a screen.

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

"May I introduce you to Miss Mei Wen?" said the general.

Liang translated her pretty name: Miss Beautiful-Bright-Day. When she had finished clearing her throat, she appeared. Barely sixteen. Born at Soochow, according to the classic formula.

All the sing-song girls, all the ladies of no importance in China, are ready to declare that they come from Soochow, a town celebrated for the beauty of its women. She was wearing her black hair with a straight fringe on her forehead and looked like a Manet model touched up by Mr. Peon Ju. She also wore against her stomach, wrapped in rose foulard silk, a flat india-rubber bottle, the hot-water bottle that is customary with all these ladies.

We sat down to table, the prince between the widow of the other general and Nella, who were apparently reconciled. They seemed to personify perfect accord. Miss Beautiful-Bright-Day sat also on a stool behind her friend. Other sing-song girls miraculously appeared and installed themselves behind each of us to an accompaniment of bubbling noises from their hot-water bottles. Between the chest of drawers and the bed the amahs of these ladies took up their positions and solemnly watched over the serving of the meal. On each side of the wardrobe musicians tuned up their primitive violins—



A KINDERGARTEN CLASS AT NANKIN.



### *The Favourite's Wardrobe*

three strings on a sort of broom handle fixed into an empty tin that had contained condensed milk.

We dined in Chinese fashion. The general, lifting his small bowl of wine, called out:

“*Kampé!*”

He drank and put the bowl upside down on Miss Beautiful-Bright-Day's head, to show that it was empty.

The prince, who took up the challenge, called out:

“*Kampé! . . .*”

He knew that one does good business after a number of *Kampés*. Sir Miles Lampson, the English Minister at Peking, also knew this.

I have an excellent friend at Yun Nan Fou, Mr. Ko, Inspector-General of the Gabelle, who once had the better of a Yun-nan pirate in a drinking bout. After three bottles of cognac, Mr. Ko was quite well and alert, whilst the brigand fell down dead drunk. The next day, full of admiration for his opponent, he accepted his terms.

Dishes followed one another without cessation: ragout of shrimps with bamboo points, jujube soup, *salmis* of ducks' tongues, fried *macaroni au soja*, sharks' fins, chickens' feet *à la cantonnaise*, duck in batter, fish mandarin with sugar and vinegar, dragons' eyes and milk of almonds perfumed like a beauty product, etc.

*Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

*"Kampé! . . . Kampé! . . . Kampé! . . ."*

It was a pitched battle between Russia and China. Miss Beautiful-Bright-Day went on singing with guttural modulations and the bored expression of paid sing-song girls. Nella and Isabella exchanged glances charged with dynamite.

Liang whispered in my ear:

"Pay attention. . . . The negotiations are about to begin."

I noticed that the prince and the general drew their stools nearer together, and as they dallied with slices of Yun-nan ham between their chopsticks, they conversed in correct phrases which would have gladdened the heart of Pirandello.

"You'd take twelve?"

"Same model as for the French army."

"Old pattern?"

"Brand new. . . . Dispatch."

Nella and Isabella listened eagerly. I did also. Liang nibbled melon seeds. The general seemed to be intensely interested in a stale egg which, under the lamp, has the semi-transparent, sea-green appearance of a decomposed Medusa. He ate it like a gourmet and whispered:

"Price to be discussed?"

"Yes," agreed the prince. "It depends for whom . . ."

"Hompffff . . ." blurted out the general

### *The Favourite's Wardrobe*

without committing himself. And with the end of a match he scribbled on the paper of his serviette something that looked like a hammer and a sickle. He hurriedly scratched out the drawing before Nella or Isabella were able to make out what it was.

The prince smacked his lips in a disappointed manner.

"No money there. . . ."

"Yes. . . . Money. . . . Plenty. . . . *Viel Geld!*"

Liang murmured to me:

"He is acting for Chinese Soviet fellows at Kiang-si. . . ."

Beautiful-Bright-Day had finished singing. The general, who behaved with absolute courtesy—correct behaviour with women, even light women, is one of their good qualities—got up and begged us to excuse him.

"I shall be back again. . . . Tea and fruits are about to be served."

Liang nudged me under the table with his knee.

"Take notice."

The general put his hand upon the latch of the wardrobe. Miss Beautiful-Bright-Day tried to stop him from opening it. They spoke to one another in an undertone. Liang explained:

"He wants to go and smoke. . . . She is asking him not to do so."

"Why?"

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

"She has some reason. I don't know what it is."

In the end, tired of the discussion, he deliberately went into the wardrobe, followed by his friend.

We had time to catch sight of a secret door at the back of the wardrobe and a flash of light. The couple had literally vanished in three seconds.

"It is the time for his pipe," said Liang, modestly lighting a Virginia cigarette. "There is a little room behind this secret door where one can smoke at leisure. . . . I will show you later. But I don't know why Mei Wen refused to let him go in."

Neither the prince nor Nella nor Madame Pao Yu seemed astonished. To them it was a very ordinary happening. Madame Pao Yu, in a long robe of emerald green velvet, her hair on her neck ornamented with jasmine flowers, her bare elbows on the table, questioned Serge. She was dying to know for whom our host was acting as intermediary. But the prince did not seem disposed to reveal the secret of the drawing sketched on the serviette.

"For whom is he acting, Serge?"

"For some people in Sinkiang."

"You are lying, my dear."

Nella put her arm softly round the Chinese lady's neck.

### *The Favourite's Wardrobe*

• “You know quite well, my dear friend, that Serge always tells the truth.”

The duel with buttoned foils continued. Liang had led me into a corner, near Beautiful-Bright-Day's dirty bed. He chuckled with delight. I like Liang very much, for he personifies the finesse and delicate humour of the Chinese. He epitomizes the ancient civilization of this prodigious and prejudiced country which alone could have produced this old proverb: “There are only two really virtuous men in the world. One is dead and the other has not yet been born!”

“You are taking part in the tournament of the Knights of Falsehood. Ho Ying Sung has not told Serge the truth. He is deceiving the general's widow. She is telling lies to Nella. And Nella will trick the lot. It is an example of the snake swallowing its own tail—the symbol of universal knavery. Anyhow, the truth is often unpleasant. One hides certain portions of one's body in public. Why should one expose one's thoughts without trousers?”

Liang toyed with a dry brush from the writing-desk as he continued:

“This little *grue* must know eight hundred characters at least, enough to read a scandalous newspaper's written insults to her enemies.”

“What sort?”

“Son of a tortoise. . . . Which means, taking

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

into consideration the lax habits of the tortoise, that your mother is a woman of easy virtue. . . . And two hundred and fifty. . . .”

“Two hundred and fifty? . . . What is that? ”

“What! You don’t know that to accuse a Chinese from Peking of two hundred and fifty is a grievous offence? And *nineteen*? Don’t you know the meaning of nineteen? In the district of Canton nineteen is a synonym for a homosexual. You see, we are more American than the Yankees, since we number our insults.”

Liang was interrupted by an unusual noise in the wardrobe. Suddenly the two doors opened quickly and a man in a dinner jacket appeared blinking his eyes; he was wearing no collar and his black hair was ruffled. We looked at him, astonished, as if he was a conjurer doing a clever trick.

The only persons who did not seem surprised were the prince and Liang. They got up and shook hands with the new arrival.

“You have been disturbed, my dear fellow! . . . What a shame! ”

In a strong Spanish accent the smoker replied disconsolately:

“Mei Wen did not warn me that the general was coming this evening. . . . How stupid. . . . Excuse me to your friends.”

We were introduced. It was Señor Gomez de

### *The Favourite's Wardrobe*

la Palma, Consul at Shanghai of the Republic of Coronada in Central America. Whilst Nella and Madame Pao Yu consoled the unfortunate man with a good peg of gin, Liang asked me if I should like to know Señor Gomez better. As I hesitated, he added :

“ Yes! Yes! He is a really romantic hero. You must not miss meeting him. Besides, you never know, you know. Suppose one day you wanted to be naturalized. . . . See! I will fix it up with him for next week at the consulate. Always see that you have two little identity photographs.”



## CHAPTER VI

### THE CITY OF REFUGE

LIANG stopped in front of a little three-story house situated in the Bubbling Wells Road in the International Concession and asked me to take note of the façade of the building. On the first floor I saw in gold letters: C.S.C., which stood for Coronada Steamship Company; on the second there was a handsome escutcheon bearing the arms of this little republic—two bananas in gold crossed on an azure field; on the third, six windows with their shutters closed.

“There you have,” he explained, “the three forms of our Consul’s activities. On the first, he lets both the offices and the flag of his consulate to Chinese shipowners who prefer to sail their cargo vessels under the green-yellow-green flag of Coronada rather than to travel under the sun of Kuomintang. It is a little protection against certain piratical attacks which begin in the China Sea and end in Bear Bay. On the second are the consulate offices and the Chan-

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

cellery. On the third is the Consul's private flat. As you see, he gets revenue from each of these floors. . . . Come along. . . . He gave me an appointment five days ago. He is a very punctual man. He will be expecting us."

We knocked at the door of the consulate. No reply. Liang, on noticing a brass plate—Chancellery—knocked again. No reply. Surprised, he was about to go up to the third floor when the door of the Chancellery opened at last and a young man who was—as we learned later—a half-caste Chinese and Portuguese, born in Macao, appeared drying his hands with a Turkish towel. Through the open door we found that it was the lavatory door that was marked *Chancellery*.

The young half-caste Portuguese Chancellor, who did not appear to be very cheerful, spoke excellent English and apologized to Liang:

"Ah, Mr. Liang. . . . I am very sorry. . . . But the Consul is not here to receive you. . . ."

"He is ill?"

"Alas, no! He has had a terrible shock. He has been urgently recalled by his Government, and yesterday had to embark hurriedly in one of the N.Y.K. boats for Colon . . ."

"Has war been declared between China and Coronada?"



THE FAMOUS WALL OF CHINA.



## *The City of Refuge*

"Oh, no! It is not a matter of that. But will you please come in, gentlemen. Don't remain in the passage."

He took us into the Consul's office and, in the sad tone of voice of a mother speaking of her sick son, he continued his story:

"It was bound to happen sooner or later. . . . You, Mr. Liang, you know His Excellency so well, you must have foreseen it, I think. Oh, how I wish he had followed the advice of those who told him that he was riding for a fall!"

"You mean that his Government has become aware of his activities?"

"Exactly! But I cannot forget the fact that Mr. de la Palma had a heart of gold. Never, gentlemen, in the whole history of diplomacy has there been a man so obliging, so affable, so ready to do a good turn. I, who have lived with him, can assure you that those who have benefited by his kindness number hundreds."

"You are referring to passports?"

"Why yes! Passports amongst other things. You know that Shanghai is often called the absconders' city. By absconders, I mean people of every nationality who have gone away from home without leaving their address. Without being a dangerous criminal, one may very possibly, I suppose, for definite reasons, wish for a change of air and country. I may add that

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

the police here respect the incognito of adventurers on the understanding that they do not talk about their affairs. It is in this way that Mr. de la Palma has for the first time had his generous actions questioned. An Austrian, married to a jealous wife who wanted to ruin him, asked our Consul, one day, to give her, for rather obscure reasons, a Coronadian passport in consideration of five thousand dollars. Mr. de la Palma, very moved by the distress of the Austrian, agreed."

"For ready money?"

"Of course. The husband was so insistent that he could not refuse. Others applied. Mr. de la Palma obliged. Why should one refuse nationalization to unfortunate persons?"

"And each of them paid five thousand dollars?"

"No. Some only offer one or two thousand. . . . At that figure Mr. de la Palma rightly feels it is an insult to the flag of the Republic and shows them the door."

"There are many citizens of the Republic of Coronada to be found in Shanghai?"

"I have counted three hundred and fifty-eight in five years. Ah! my master has worked hard for his country. For he gives each of them a pamphlet of economic propaganda and touring information, and makes them, in addition, promise to learn Spanish!"

## *The City of Refuge*

My friend Liang turned to me with all the seriousness in the world and remarked:

"Under these circumstances, I cannot possibly understand the brutal recall of a diplomatist so useful to his country."

The young man shook his head.

"Unfortunately, there was another matter which attracted the attention of the gentlemen of the International Concession. . . ."

He lowered his voice and continued:

"Would you mind coming with me to the third floor? "

"To Mr. de la Palma's flat? "

"Yes. We will go by the little private staircase, for we cannot get in by the front one. There is a detective on guard."

We went up the little stairway into the untidy sitting-room, in the middle of which was a large table covered with a green cloth. The young secretary, with the careful movement of a nurse uncovering a corpse, lifted the cloth and showed us a roulette board with two tables with double zero. He continued:

"This was the cause of his downfall. Mr. de la Palma, who was devoted to gambling, met a rich Chinaman who wanted to start a roulette club. He was not allowed to do so in the French Concession; they forbid these things. The Consul's house, enjoying extra territorial privileges, had appeared to the Chinaman very suit-

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

able to the undertaking, provided that it was conducted with discretion. My master at first refused his offer. Then, touched by the noble gesture of the Chinaman, who offered to subscribe a hundred dollars to Coronada charities, Mr. de la Palma consented."

"Then he reaped no benefit from the payments?"

"Yes, a little. . . . He got a hundred dollars a séance and thirty per cent. of the stakes."

"That was a good deal."

"The Chinaman had threatened, if he refused, to withhold the hundred dollars a year to the charities."

"So Mr. de la Palma sacrificed himself?"

"Yes, once more. . . . Everything went very well for some months. Unfortunately, one evening there was a terrible scandal. A Canadian engineer who was sitting next to the croupier, close to the roulette, wanted, after having lost one thousand five hundred dollars, to get up and have a whisky. . . . Well, gentlemen, he was not able to do so. You understand what I mean?"

"He had died of heart disease?"

"No, gentlemen, I said *he was not able to get up*. . . . He made several ineffectual attempts. . . . But without success. . . . I will explain. . . . This engineer unfortunately had nails in his boots. Well, his left foot had come into con-



A CHINESE FUNERAL AT YUN-NAN-FOU.



THE TOMBS OF THE MINGS.



## *The City of Refuge*

tact with a powerful magnet hidden under the roulette board which was used to attract the ball at certain moments to the advantage of the croupier. . . . The Canadian, electrical engineering being his particular calling, quickly realized the cause of his sudden paralysis. With superhuman effort he pulled his foot free—leaving the sole of his shoe—and divulged to the gamblers the Chinaman's device. A free fight followed, worthy of the pen of a Dante. The Herculean Canadian, mad with rage, landed one full on the Chinaman's face, which cost him three teeth: one fell in the roulette board—I even remember the number, 16, black and *manqué*; the second in Mr. de la Palma's whisky and soda, and the third in the *décolleté* of a Russian lady, a refugee and taxi girl in her spare time at the Del Monte. . . . The two croupiers were knocked about by other powerful punters and my master owed his safety to a hasty flight through the bathroom window. The Press generally did not take much notice of the scandal, but a Chinese rag published a paragraph full of suggestions in these words:

*“Gossip has been rife for several days concerning the curious experience of an electrical diplomat who, when he plays roulette, guides the ball by such a strong current that it obeys his secret power. . . . If this is*

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

*true, we hope that this expert will soon exercise his consular talents in the Principality of Monaco.' "*

The young secretary was silent. He reverently put back the green cloth over the dusty roulette board and ended up by saying:

"You have foreseen the conclusion, gentlemen. The Foreign Minister of Coronada heard about it. He immediately sent for his consul, who, at the present moment, is voyaging to Central America. . . . One more refugee!"

The secretary raised his voice. He became vehement.

"Well, gentlemen, what will be the upshot of this hasty decision? The flag of Coronada will no longer fly on the C.S.C. boats. The *heimatlos* or 'wanted men' will no longer find a country where they will be welcomed, and the poor of Shanghai will lose a hundred dollars a year . . . a nice little sum! After all, many diplomats who upset nations by their foolish actions, which lead to open ruptures, remain in office, and now they are down on a man whom business men regard as a benefactor. . . . It is absurd."

The bitterness of the secretary was grievous. Liang tried to console him as he went downstairs.

"You will have another consul soon."

"That will not be the same thing."

### *The City of Refuge*

“ You were very fond of Mr. de la Palma? ”

The young half-breed stopped on the last step, exclaiming with his hand upon his heart:

“ Yes, I loved him as a mother. . . . ” Adding in an undertone: “ Because through him I got ten dollars a passport and three per cent. on the pool.”



## CHAPTER VII

### BREAK-NECK CHINESE

THE *Little Club* gradually emptied. César and Mimi, the sparkling pair of dancers, had finished their excellent turn. Several Englishmen, bank directors, and Americans, cigarette importers, drank up their last glasses to the gay rhythm of "The Big Bad Wolf."

Liang opened the conversation :

"I assure you that over there, in the West, they know absolutely nothing about the political situation here. Explain it to me in a few words, if you can. . . !"

As a matter of fact, on our side of the Suez Canal we are ignorant of everything to do with China. The best way to sum up the situation would be to proceed by analogy and compare France of the Middle Ages with China of to-day. Because, outside centres such as Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tien-tsin and a kilometre on the railroad, three hundred and ninety-nine millions of Chinese live without electricity just as their ancestors lived ten centuries ago.

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

Imagine Nankin, the official capital of the Republic, in the place of Paris, Canton in the place of Marseilles and Peking as Lille.

We should have, on the one part, Mr. Wang Ching Wei, President of Yuan, as Governor of Paris, with several provinces under his control: Che-kiang, Kiang-su, Anwhei, Kiang-si and Hunan instead of the Isle of France, Normandy, Nivernais and Champagne. Being the strong man of the Republic, he governs Tchang Kai Chek. All the south-west, that is to say, Kwangtung, Kwang-si and Kwei-chow (Gascogne, Bearn, Charante) are under the orders of Mr. Hou Han Min, the rival of Mr. Wang Ching Wei. Mr. Hou Han Min maintains that the principles of Kuomintang, the successor of Sun Yat Sen, are the only ones that can save China from disaster. There has been, however, since 1927, a misunderstanding between Bordeaux and Paris. Bordeaux took great exception to the Central Government attitude towards Japan, accusing it of weakness in letting her have *carte blanche* in Manchuria. One can point out to Mr. Hou Han Min that he can speak without fear, but that if he had had the Japanese in the Kwang-si, at the very gates of Canton, he would understand the necessity of compromising with a powerful neighbour. But this concerns the two enemies of Kuomintang and we cannot judge regarding their decisions. It is only fair to add that

### *Break-Neck Chinese*

recently there has been talk of a tentative reconciliation between Canton and Nankin. But Mr. Hou Han Min, will he go to Canossa?

All the rest of China is a prey to civil war. There is discord even at Nankin; there are rebellious generals and war is smouldering amongst the Communists; Lille (Peking) obeys orders from Paris, because Flanders, Artois and Lorraine are under the domination of Generals Wang Fou and Ho Ying Tchin, who still had for their neighbours in February last a hundred and fifty thousand men of Tchang Tsin Liang's army, unemployed, badly paid, with non-commissioned officers who get hardly a dollar a month. Well, what happens to a Chinese soldier without pay? He becomes a bandit. *Primo vivere!* Nankin has discovered a momentary solution: these hundred and fifty thousand men have been handed over to the son of Tchang Tso Lin with the task of repressing banditry in the provinces of Hupeh, Honan and Anwheu.

In the two provinces of Burgundy and Morvan—that is to say Shansi and Honan—we find General Yen Shi Chan, beaten in 1930 by Tchang Kai Chek. He had for his neighbour the enormous Christian general, Fong Yu Siang (twenty stone): the latter has retired into the Buddhist monastery of Tai Shan at Shan-tung to be cured of his asthma. He writes verses, reads philosophy and eats six meals a day. He is a

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

sage who needs much pardon, because he has sinned greatly.

In the centre, in Auvergne, as it were, we find the Chinese Soviet Republic which occupies part of Kiang-si and lays claim to the district of Poitou (Sze-chuen), which has suffered from the horror of a long struggle between Generals Liou Wen Wei and Liou Siang, uncle and nephew. The nephew won and shares this rich province with four rebellious generals who tax to their hearts' content the unhappy people who have paid their imports in advance up to 1987. . . . When one speaks of the authority of Tchang Kai Chek to these generals, they reply:

"Tchang Kai Chek? We don't know him."

To return to the Red Army in the Auvergne commanded by General Tchou Teh, let us add that in his last annual report his delegates have pretended:

First. To have seized a hundred thousand rifles and a thousand quick-firers from the Central Government.

Second. To have wiped out forty-one of Tchang Kai Chek's regiments.

Third. To have killed two generals and made prisoners of twenty other generals and colonels.

The hostilities are continuing. In the south-east at Fu-kien (in the county of Nice) a rebellion broke out in December, 1933, fomented by Mr. Eugene Chen, with Generals Li Chi Sum, presi-



THE SMILING BUDDHA AT THE MONASTRY OF PURE COMPASSION IN  
HANGKOW.



### *Break-Neck Chinese*

dent of the government of the people, and Chen Ming Shu commanding the famous XIXth Army, celebrated for its resistance to the Japanese in the outskirts of Shanghai.

Tchang Kai Chek found fault with his subordinate Chen Ming Shu for having accepted jars of wine whilst he was Minister of Communications at Nankin. To-day the revolt at Fu-kien is merely a memory. The chiefs of the brave XIXth Army have had cheques from the Central Government, which was the most gentlemanly solution of the problem without shedding any blood.

But scarcely was this sedition liquidated when another rose up in the north-western district. It was the hundred and fifty-second civil war since 1912. Paris ordered General Sun Tien Ying, who distinguished himself against the Japanese, to go with seventy thousand men to colonize Brittany. Unfortunately, in passing through Normandy, he ran up against General Ma Hung Kuei, the Governor of Calvados. Alarmed at the invasion of seventy thousand ill-fed men, he protested, pretending that these soldiers wanted to conquer his province instead of wishing to colonize Armorique!

And in Brittany—otherwise Sinkiang—the position is still more difficult. General Shen Shi Tsai has conquered the troops of General Mahomatan Ma Chung Ying as well as those

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

of his ally, Chang Pei Yuan, assassinated in January. The conflict seemed to be finished when a revolutionary government sprang up at St. Brieuc (Kashgar), with the support of the Emir of Khotan and the repeated war-cry: "No Chinese at Sinkiang."

Sabit Domula, the strength of the resistance, sent delegates to Kabul to come to an arrangement with the Afghan Government. So that Sin-kiang is torn into three groups who fight for three zones of influence on behalf of three rival powers: the Soviets in the east, England in the south and Japan in the west; this last under the influence of General Ma.

Whilst we were sketching with Liang this picture of the position of affairs in China, a picture which changes from day to day and is no longer true from the time it is written to the time it is read, my friend exclaimed with a sarcastic smile:

"And all that does not prevent certain gentlemen at Geneva from speaking of the Chinese Republic as an indivisible whole and making a wonderful impression on poor souls who only know that it is a country of sharks' fins and jade necklaces."

"What do you expect! A republic with four hundred millions of inhabitants will not settle down in a moment. However, the authorities

### *Break-Neck Chinese*

at Nankin are making meritorious efforts to restore civil power by trying to reorganize the provincial governments. Unfortunately, the power is in the hands of the generals. These men thereby become very rich and look upon their province as a piece of personal property, and its inhabitants as people to be taxed and made slaves of as they choose. We have referred to Mr. Hou Han Min of Canton. But the real head is General Chen Tsai Tang. He has a fully equipped army, a fleet and airplanes. Will he agree to be under the rule of the King of Prussia, in other words of Tchang Kai Chek, who would want him to reduce his army and come under his direct control?

“The United States of Europe will for a very long time be merely a Utopia. Well, there is as much difference between a Chinese of Peking and a Chinese of Foochow as between a European of Stockholm and a European of Messina.”



**PART II**

**NANKIN**



## CHAPTER VIII

THUS SPOKE MR. WANG CHING WEI. . . .

MADAME PAO YU was speaking over the telephone in a voice like the song of a nightingale under an April moon.

"We are going to Nankin. . . . You will come, won't you? Whilst we are busy with our affairs, you will be able to see the Government officials of the new capital."

"You are going with Serge? "

"And Nella. . . . Oh, yes, with Nella too. No, no! It is not my joke! "

"You two are great friends? "

"We hug each other with our claws out. . . ."

The same evening we started. Our sleeping-cars were next to the armoured car occupied by the guard—two sections of Chinese soldiers with rifles and ammunition. The next morning we reached Nankin, whose huge, battlemented walls were silhouetted against a pale, lazulite sky.

An important funeral held us up in the main street. The family, wearing mourning, which is white, was, according to custom, preceded

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

by professional mourners and painted boys, travesties in red and green, and an orchestra which played in lively time an old Parisian air which, in former days, used to be the delight of our fathers at the *Alcazar d'été*:

Pour vingt-cinq francs (bis)  
Pour vingt-cinq francs cinquante,  
On a chez Godchaux  
Un vêtement bien chaud, etc. . . .

I refrained from smiling, because I had already seen a funeral procession at Shanghai in which the band accompanied the *Cujus* to the merry tune of the *Mattchiche*. Curious to find out who was being laid to rest, I inquired of the hotel-keeper. He showed me the announcement of the decease of Mr. Wang Chao Yuan and translated for me its contents.

"Messrs. Wang Yung, etc. . . . overwhelmed with grief, beg to inform you that their father, uncle and brother, Mr. Wang Chao Yuan, died in his bed at Nankin at five o'clock in the morning on the first moon at the age of seventy-eight years.

"The body will be buried by his son, who will choose the date of his interment. The 8th of the first moon, ceremony on the fourth day after his decease. The 12th, prayers of the bonzes. The 13th, *auto-da-fé* of papers of the deceased. . . . The 17th, prayers by the lamas.



AN OPEN AIR RESTAURANT AT PEKIN.



A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY IN THE MONASTRY  
OF THE PURPLE MOUNTAIN.



*Thus Spoke Mr. Wang Ching Wei. . . .*

"His son feels that he is to blame for not having kept his father alive.

*"Titles of the deceased:* General. By Imperial Decree authorized to wear the fur of the great rat. Authorized to ride on horseback into the Forbidden City of Peking. Authorized to go by boat and by sledge into the Port Hsi-yuen-men. Often invited to dinner at the Palace. Has received from the Emperor Koan Hsin panels written in his august handwriting, cakes, handkerchiefs, brushes and remedies."

A funeral is indeed an important ceremony amongst the Chinese, and they do not know how to pay enough honour to the memory of a father or a mother. I was told at Peking of the case of a woman married to a soldier who had been away for a long time. The soldier's father died suddenly. The daughter-in-law, being without money, sold her daughter for fifty dollars in order to celebrate her father-in-law's funeral with due dignity.

After having paid our respects to the mortal remains of this unknown general, I left my companions to their mysterious negotiations and hastened to visit three friends of France: Mr. Tsen Tson Ming, Vice-Minister of Railways and a distinguished poet; Dr. Chu Min Yi, Secretary-General of the Yuan Executive, and Mr. Tao Fan Chang, Vice-Minister of Communications,

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

married to a Frenchwoman. The most popular man in Nankin is Mr. Chu Min Yi, Doctor of Medicine of the faculty of Strasbourg. Mr. Chu Min Yi is an apostle of physical culture. He wears cossack boots, English khaki trousers, a black shell jacket and a Saumur cavalry officer's cap. This excellent man paid me the honour of giving me his thesis for his doctor's degree, written in French, entitled:

*"The sexual tendencies of the rabbit and its relations with the oestrian cycle of the ovary."*

It is dedicated:

"To the memory of my mother and uncle, and to my father, my aunt, my sisters and my friends."

On the following page:

"To Monsieur Herriot, Mayor of Lyons, and to Monsieur Lepine. . . ."

It is a pleasure to visit Nankin under the ægis of Dr. Chu Min Yi. The G.H.Q. of the Republic calls to mind Angora, the improvised capital chosen by Mustapha Kemal, the Ghazi, where in 1925 the Embassies and the Legations found difficulty in housing their representatives. There was not much comfort and one day, during luncheon at the Polish Legation, we learned that the Minister had had to borrow a thousand litres of water from the American Embassy.

At Nankin the Ministers are housed in beautiful palaces with green roofs happily built in pure

*Thus Spoke Mr. Wang Ching Wei. . . .*

Chinese style, so that the new metropolis will not be spoilt by the sight of huge sky-scrapers.

At the entrance to a long avenue running through the town from east to west stands a column adorned with Chinese characters, lit up at night with neon lights. The famous maxim of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, put there for the perusal of Kuomintang statesmen :

*One must live to serve—and not to conquer.*

Then the visiting began at Mr. Chen's, the Minister of Industries, on to Mr. Chou, Minister of Communications, Mr. Wang, Minister of Public Instruction, and last of all, Mr. Wang Ching Wei, President of the Council, or to be more exact, the Chief of the Yuan Executive.

To show, by the way, the politeness of the Chinese to visitors in the Ministers' waiting-rooms, a cup of tea is offered to them by a servant. Why shouldn't the same be done in the rue de Grenelle, the Quai d'Orsay or Whitehall?

Mr. Wang Ching Wei is a charming man, still quite young, who wears Chinese dress; he understands English, but does not speak it. I discussed with him an extremely delicate subject—Communism in China. His opinions agree with those of Mr. Yih Koung Cho, late Minister of Railways, whom I met in Shanghai.

Communism is not suitable to the Chinese.

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

People discontented with the Government, which is faulty in certain districts, throw themselves into the hands of bad teachers who make them foolish promises. Chinese Communists are bandits who do not shrink from any crime, like Li Tzu Cheng and Chang Hsien Chung under the Ming Dynasty, of sinister memory. The teachings of these brigands inculcate ideas of class war and create confusion in a country where all men have been equal since 1911. They have arbitrarily divided the people into different categories. And as fire and slaughter form part of their faith, nobody is sure of escaping from the executioner. You will find a statement of the terrible conditions of the Red Zone in the Sixth Report of the Commission of Rural Rehabilitation. The population of Kiang-si has fallen from twenty-six to twenty millions. There is a place called the Tomb of the Ten Thousand, where thousands of the civil population have been piled up. The lot of the inhabitants of these parts is like that of hunted wild animals. Our Government's most urgent task is to suppress Red banditry and also ordinary banditry.

That is Mr. Wang Ching Wei's view.

"And how will you do it, Mr. President?"

"Marshal Tchang Kai Chek has appointed the son of Tchang Tso Lin, the young Marshal Tchang Sue Liang, Vice-Commandant-in-Chief of the forces detailed to subdue bandits of every



LAMAS AT PRAYER IN THEIR TEMPLE AT PEKIN.



*Thus Spoke Mr. Wang Ching Wei. . .*

description. He has his headquarters at Hankow. You will soon hear talk of him."

It is to be hoped so, although the young Marshal has nothing of the great leader about him. We met him one day at the hotel at Hang-chow; he was dressed in knickerbockers and looked like a golf champion. He was attended by his faithful English counsellor, Donald, who follows him like a shadow. He plays Japanese billiards and seems to be more interested in making a thousand than in freeing China from the brigands that infest it. Happily, Tchang Kai Chek is a man of determination, who in a circular issued the 28th of last July defined the National Security as follows:

First. War on banditry.

Second. Development of productive undertakings which will improve the *Min-Li* (the strength of the people) and the *Kuo Li* (the vitality of the nation).

It is a laudable programme and we are awaiting its realization. For the Anglo-Saxon commentators on the situation in China in 1934 show definite signs of pessimism. Recently one read in the *Shanghai Evening Post*:

*"China is divided at the present time in an Indianized Sinkiang, a Frenchified Yun-nan, a Sovietized Mongolia and a Japanese Manchuria. Not to mention the Kiang-si, the Hupeh, the*

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

*Hunan, etc., which are Bolshevized, the Shanghai Concessions and a Chinese Republic which has its headquarters at Nankin! . . . So that the problem is as follows: how many more bits can they nibble off China and still have it remain China? ”*

Let us reassure our dear European and transatlantic rivals in China and elsewhere at once. If they are afraid that the French Government—as several American journalists have stated—wishes to conquer Yun-nan by force of arms, they are sadly mistaken.

Our friends the Chinese can sleep peacefully. They will not be nibbled at as far as we are concerned.

## CHAPTER IX

### WHITE AND YELLOW PSYCHOLOGY

WE had been invited to the well-known Chinese painter's Peon Ju, who owns in the Passy of Nankin, a quarter where a number of European villas have recently been built, a studio in Montparnasse style fitted with vigorous canvases on which he harmonizes perspective and Western composition with the poetically decorative sense of his fellow-countrymen.

The ultra modern intelligentsia were there. As they nibbled dragons' eyes and drank green tea, these gentlemen, who represent Confucius in a tail-coat and Lao-tze tinged with Freudism, were keenly discussing the relationship of the white and yellow races.

"Your psychological mistakes, in our opinion, sometimes cost you dear," a high official said to me. "We were recently spoken of as the Yellow Peril. Do you know that it was a mistake to give us that name? If your motor-car manufacturers had been advised by people who knew China better, they would not have

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

used this description, which wounded many susceptibilities and was the cause of much misunderstanding. . . . What! After the *Black Peril*, the *Yellow Peril*? Are we, then, niggers from Central Africa? Our civilization four thousand years old; is it not worth more consideration?"

A young professor of the University with an American degree remarked:

"The whites do not understand us. . . . We are to them manure. They never consider the hypersensitiveness of people oppressed by the Western races—masters of the world. . . . At least they think they are!"

And Mr. Charles C. Hou went further:

"You don't even know that you are, in our eyes, the symbol of imperialism and oppression. You are quite unaware that in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tien-tsin thousands of wrinkled eyes spy you and watch your every movement at all hours of the day? A wounding remark leaves on our minds an indelible scar. When Douglas Fairbanks came to Shanghai, no Chinaman of importance wanted to meet him. Why? . . . Because they remembered his part in 'The Thief of Baghdad.' In the course of the picture, he seized a Mongol prince by his pigtail and threw him out of the window. You white people found that amusing and you roared with laughter in your stalls. Here, we felt cruelly

## *White and Yellow Psychology*

insulted. What would an Englishman say if yellow conquerors showed him a film with Queen Victoria being beaten by a Chinese washer-woman? The Press made a protest against the Hollywood actor. More recently we had from America a Mr. Schafer, a new lecturer at the University at Nankin. At the end of a lecture, this professor, to amuse his pupils, showed some films taken in this country. They were angry because these films were offensive to China. They were compelled, owing to the insistence of the students, to send the professor away.'

"It is a difficult problem, this question of white and yellow races. You despise us. We despise you more. However, the young Chinaman, having studied French in Paris and English at King's College or at Columbia, only thinks of a well-cut suit and a becoming tie.

"Some go further than that. I overheard two students in a tramcar in Peking who were talking bad English to astonish their neighbours. How many shops have English names although no English customer ever goes into them? We have, then, on the one part, the poor complex of the native, the enemy of the white, and on the other hand the irresistible desire to imitate, which is an indirect admission of superiority. We are proud on our part, of our history, our language and our literature which is so rich; we are proud to think that we were already civilized when dark

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

barbarity reigned in Europe. But all the same, the famous inferiority complex, dear to the hearts of German philosophers, appears as soon as we come in contact with the Western people.

“But this lack of understanding between Europeans and Chinese, is it not due to the fact that they do not speak the same language? I mean by that, the language of the heart, which is universal. The words ‘science’ and ‘logic’ are untranslatable into Chinese, as the late Mr. Kou Houn Ming once remarked.”

“That is why, gentlemen,” exclaimed an important official, “I affirm, and it is not a paradox, that the more our young people study in Europe and America, the more the misunderstanding will increase between white and yellow. The instruction, instead of bringing us together, puts us farther apart. . . . In days long ago, when our intercourse with the whites was merely for the purpose of trading—sell me this, buy me that—the disputes were not serious. One settled everything immediately by the appearance of a cruiser asking Mr. Li to pay the bills owing to Messrs. Smith, Durand or Krauss. It was a battle of owing and receiving. . . . A match in dealing. . . . Voltaire, Darwin, Kant, Haeckel and Einstein were not yet the collecting clerks of the West, materialist and greedy. To-day things are different. For their studies in the West do not alter the oriental mentality of young Wang

### *White and Yellow Psychology*

and little Chen. The Asiatic outlook is quite different. They are not logical. One is apt to forget that the descendants of Descartes have a very differently constituted brain from those of Confucius, Lao-tze, Yang-tze and Tchouang Tcheou."

An old scholar, who would certainly have been a mandarin under the ancient regime, also gave his opinion. In a cracked voice, speaking polished French, he begged us to forgive his impoliteness.

"May I ask you a simple question? What would your Catholics and Protestants in Europe and America say if, one fine day, they saw Chinese missionaries land in order to preach the beautiful and high moral code of our wise men? They would exclaim with indignation: 'Do the Chinese take us for Kaffirs or Kanakas?' I can imagine the American immigration officials scrutinizing with a suspicious air the yellow evangelists who dared to pay the United States Y.M.C.A. back in their own coin. . . . Please remember that I realize the good intentions of these white missionaries, amongst whom there are saintly men, worthy of respect. But, apart from personal considerations, I ask: What right have people, whose religion has nothing to teach us, to come and preach to us as if we were cannibals or savages when Confucius has codified the law of the gentleman whose first considera-

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

tion is the *ming fen ta yi*—that is to say, the principles of honour and duty.”

The controversy lasted a long time. I paid my homage to Confucius's moral code, whilst a young writer, who was ready to criticize his country, exclaimed:

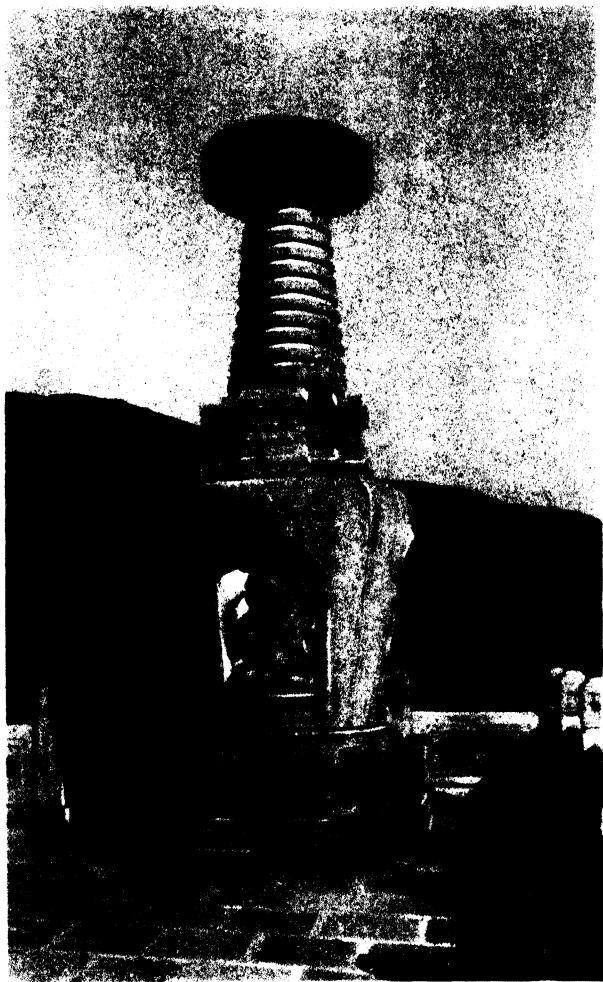
“Quite true, in principle it is magnificent; but admit that Europeans have good reason to despise us when they see the corrupt practices of our chiefs.”

There was silence for a moment. Then a young yellow Bolshevik put in:

“Ah, well! . . . Our noble morale does not prevent our generals from selling their troops to the highest bidder. In 1933 they negotiated successfully with the Japanese. When a general withdraws from the field of battle, that means he is going to touch money. One day I will write—outside China—‘In Praise of the Squeeze’ on our Republic.”

“You will be wrong, my young friend,” the scholar objected.

“No, master! You must glorify corruption, because the ‘Squeeze’ saves many human lives. Rest assured that if I was a soldier in the army of General X or Z I should pray the good genii every morning that my supreme chief would deign to receive that very evening a good fat cheque in dollars on a Shanghai bank. All



THE PAGODA OF THE TEMPLE OF THE GREEN  
CLOUD NEAR PEKIN.



### *White and Yellow Psychology*

humanitarians, all who respect the lives of others, all sensible men ought to approve of the corruptibility of army chiefs. A general who takes money is a father to his men."

The young Chinaman, carried away by his enthusiasm, took me apart, and, to make me understand better the full import of his deductions, he added:

"For that reason the misfortune that fell upon all of you from 1914 to 1918 in Europe was owing to the incorruptibility of your generals. If you had had the good fortune to be led by French, English and German generals who would have accepted a few dollars, millions of fighters in horizon blue, khaki and field grey, and at least two hundred milliards of francs, would have been saved."

And he ended up with an air of supreme superiority by saying:

"In fact, you are not truly civilized!"

"No," I replied, "we are not as civilized as you are, on the whole, and seeing that we don't thoroughly understand ourselves, we look to you to give us a hand. You doubtless remember the Chinaman who, one day, placing an offering of dried meat on the altar of his ancestors, heard this remark from a white Christian friend:

"'Why this dried meat? Your late father cannot eat it now.'

"The Chinaman shook his head and did not

*Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

reply. A month later he happened to accompany the white friend to the cemetery and saw him place flowers on his wife's grave. Then, very gently, he, in turn, asked:

“‘Why these flowers? Madame, your late wife, cannot smell them.’”

## CHAPTER X

### FRANCO-CHINESE MARRIAGES

A SENTIMENTAL but serious problem. We had an opportunity of discussing it during a dinner at Nankin given by Prince Serge to a Chinaman who knew an intimate friend of Chin Pan Shien, ex-secretary of the League of Young Communists, chosen by the Komintern of Moscow to replace Tchen Tchao Yeon in China.

The imbroglio became more and more complicated, judging by the confidences of the prince, who had told me the previous evening:

“It is true that our friend from Shanghai, General Ho Ying Sung, is about to obtain a confidential post with the Red rebels. He has spoken to me about my tanks. The snag lies in the question of payment. Well, the man with whom we are going to dine to-morrow knows the Finance Minister of the Party very well. You understand?”

The dinner was a very gay affair. We played at the Chinese game of Buddha, the cock and

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

the ant. The Buddha is the thumb, the cock is the first finger and the little finger is the ant. If you put up your thumb at the same time as your opponent puts up his first finger, you have won, because Buddha eats the cock. If you lift your thumb when he lifts his little finger, you have lost, because the ant gnaws at Buddha. The cycle is the symbol of eternity, for if Buddha eats the cock, the cock eats the ant and the ant eats Buddha.

At dessert, after the *Bonzes' pillows*, which are like fritters, the conversation in our corner turned upon Franco-Chinese marriages. The lady next to me on the right was a Frenchwoman married to a Chinaman. On my left, Nella, the *topazine*, apologized for half-breeds.

"You see," she said, smiling and showing her pearly white teeth, "my father was French, my mother Indian. The result is not an outrage to æstheticism!"

"Ah! Your father was French. . . . Is that so!" exclaimed our fellow-countrywoman. "I myself am married to a Chinaman. I do not in the least regret it, for we are very fond of each other and I am contented with my lot. But I feel sure that all Frenchwomen in my position cannot say the same."

In truth, if one looks upon the marriage of yellow with white as an attempt at the fusion of the races, one must admit that the result is not

### *Franco-Chinese Marriages*

often satisfactory. Apart from a few exceptions, harmony cannot reign between a Frenchwoman and a Chinaman. It is the fault of neither one nor the other. Everything divides them—language, customs, food, routine of daily life, the way of looking at things and the way of expressing one's feelings.

How do these unions come about? The young Chinese student comes to France. As is natural, he grows enamoured of a French girl in the Quartier Latin and she is rather attracted by him. The liaison continues. The young man passes his exams and, before returning to China, offers to marry his friend, which is very laudable of him. The fascination of the unknown, the mystery that surrounds a long voyage to that China of the fables about which she has not the faintest knowledge, attracts the young French girl. They are married. Jeanette or Germaine has become Madame Chung or Madame Hai. She goes into a Chinese house, where she finds everything astonishing, if not shocking. She shivers in winter—the Chinese rarely heat their houses. She eats food that amuses her at first as she plays with her chopsticks, but she soon wearies when she has to eat it twice a day all the year round. She expected, maybe, to live in the privacy of lovers—*tête à tête* with her husband. What a mistake! Privacy is rare in China. Mr. Chung or Mr. Hai possesses a large family.

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

The Chinese—and it is this which creates the solid defence of their huge country—possess a sense of family life to a degree that amazes us.

The French wife finds herself in the presence of the father, the mother, the brothers and the sisters of her husband. They all live under the same roof. The father exercises supreme authority over his son, who respects him. Unless she is extremely modern, the mother as a rule looks upon her daughter-in-law as a domestic drudge, expecting her to be obedient to her caprices. How can the French daughter-in-law and the Chinese mother-in-law understand each other, seeing that the young woman hardly knows how to say "*Kampé*" (Here's to you), "*Siésié*" (Thank you), "*T'ing hao*" (Very good) and "*Pou hao*" (Not good)? What dramas are played in the daily association of the too-emancipated foreigner and the tyrannical mother-in-law!

Then again, the husband, the kindly student in Paris or Lyons, back in the family circle, abandons by degrees his European dress, or only wears it very occasionally, and adopts his national costume. He gives up the use of the knife and fork and falls back into his traditional habits—and who can blame him? After a year or two of married life the French wife may not have presented her husband with a son. However great his love for her may be, she hears her sisters-

### *Franco-Chinese Marriages*

in-laws' veiled recriminations—they jeer at the white woman—and the reproaches of his mother, who says repeatedly: “I told you so! My son did wrong in bringing this foreign she-devil under our roof.” If, on the other hand, a daughter is born, sighs, complaints and groans from the family: “A girl! Is that all she can give to our son!”

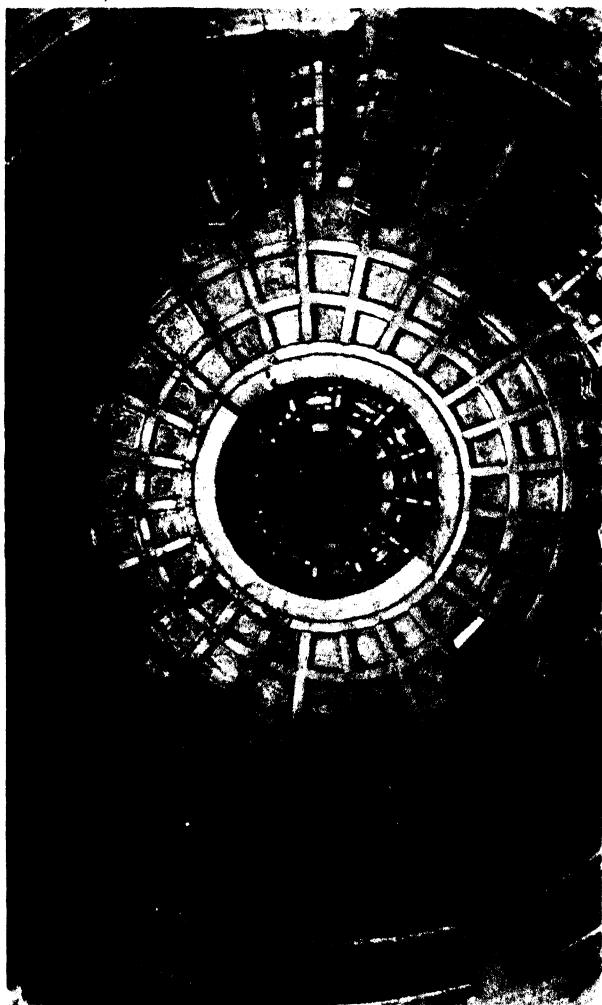
Or perhaps the French girl has come across a young Chinaman whose parents had already affianced him, at the age of twelve, with one of his young fellow-countrywomen. In Europe, influenced by our mode of life, he forgets this betrothal. It is such a long time ago. He goes home. He is reminded of the promise made to young Mademoiselle Jade Cloud. It is pointed out to him that he cannot possibly treat with public contempt the Wang family, who trusted in his promises. So he marries Mademoiselle Jade Cloud and his white wife is relegated to the rank of a concubine. If she has a son, it will belong to Jade Cloud, her husband, her mother-in-law; to everybody except herself.

In certain cases, the young French girl has had the rare opportunity of marrying a rich and independent young Chinaman, who is not beholden to his family and can afford to say to them: “I mean to live with my wife. You can remain in your own home!” But for that both money and courage are necessary.

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

In the course of my wanderings in China, I have heard of tragic cases. A French girl arrives at Peking with her husband. She soon discovers three concubines installed in the *yamen*. Enraged, she shoots and wounds her husband. Another young country girl married a Chinaman. No child at the end of eighteen months. He takes a concubine. Ten months elapse. The French wife gives birth to a boy. Too late! The concubine has also given the husband a son. The little half-breed will be the outcast of the family, who will reserve all their affection and all their attention for the little pure-blooded Chinese. At Tien-tsin, I was told of a French girl who, having started for the interior of China with her husband, escaped and begged the authorities to repatriate her, because her cruel husband was after her. She had to be hidden in the hold of a ship to which her husband had sent the police in the hope of finding her.

This is, one hopes, an exception. But in regretting a white and yellow marriage, one need not go so far as to take into account serious cruelty. There are so many points of difference between the two races. Out of eight Franco-Chinese couples in Hang-chow, twenty-five in Nankin and the two hundred that one can count in Shanghai, Peking and Tien-tsin, let us hope that there are some who are quite happy. If,



THE CEILING OF THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN :  
PEKIN.



### *Franco-Chinese Marriages*

however, the majority of these couples do not enjoy happiness, it is only fair to realize that it is neither the fault of the Chinese husband nor the French wife.

“In order to get along satisfactorily with the Chinaman that she loves,” said my neighbour, “the European ought to go and live with him in a desert isle far away from his family and his traditions; far from that labyrinth of customs that are so different and that the Western person comes up against at every turn.”

This same difficulty applies equally to white marriages! But to return to the French girl who is absolutely determined to marry a son-of-heaven, it is necessary that she must fully appreciate certain facts which still obtain in China in spite of the republican laws—on paper, in spite of the superficial modern ideas of a few Chinese who are in frequent contact with Europeans. She should realize:

First. That a woman in China does not marry merely her husband, but all his relations!

Second. That the marriage contract entails an obligation between herself and her husband's family.

Third. That the words “Alone at last!” do not have any meaning for the majority of young Chinese married couples.



PART III

HANG-CHOW



## CHAPTER XI

### THE GAMES OF LOVE AND OF DEATH

PRINCE SERGE made an appointment with his two charming lady friends at Peking, where we were to meet them four days later, after having changed our route to Hang-chow, capital of Che-kiang, celebrated for its Buddhist monasteries, its bore and its tea.

One hundred and eighty miles of road good enough to go by car from Nankin to Hang-chow. The town is situated on the side of a lake surrounded by picturesque hills. For a long time it was governed by a celebrated mayor—Mr. Geo, an engineer trained at the French Central School, married to a Frenchwoman who received us cordially, doing the honours of the city.

Hang-chow is a town to which one ought to take politicians, public men, Ministers and bad rulers of all countries. They would find food for reflexion in the temple of Yao Fei. This brave general of the Sung Dynasty loyally defended his sovereign against the Mongols, but

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

was killed in a cowardly manner by a jealous rival. Well, not only have they built a temple in honour of this hero, but they have erected a memorial to the traitor and his wife *to dishonour their memory*, and to hold them up to public contempt.

Buried up to their waists in the sand, the detestable couple are a terrible example to posterity. We eventually learnt that their busts were covered with spittle, and we saw a young patriot eight years old imitating the well-known gesture of the famous statue of the Manneken Pis.

“Don’t you find,” said a Chinese friend of ours, “that a statue ought to be used not only to perpetuate laudable actions, but also to remind people of the crimes and despicable deeds of those who abuse the confidence of the public?”

We approved of this point of view, and Serge remarked for my benefit:

“Good heavens! If you did the same thing in Europe, I know capitals where there would be more statues than houses!”

The next day, at eleven o’clock in the evening, by the bright light of the moon which silvered the Pagoda of the Autumn Moon and the Fish Pond, whose surface twinkled with spangles, after having discussed their affairs, Serge took me along with a certain Mr. Shih, whose name

## *The Games of Love and of Death*

means stone and whose impenetrable flat face looked like a tombstone.

He was not a very cheerful person. So, in spite of myself, I could not help thinking of the Garden of Torture when Octave Mirbeau let loose a flood of literary sadism in a Grand Guignolesque China. Mr. Shih, a particularly refined man, seemed to me to be capable of rivalling in cruelty that commander of the Northern Army who, tired of the kisses of one of his concubines, one day casually knocked a long nail into her head.

The car travelled on in the moonlight outside the town, through the desert country towards an unknown destination.

“Where are we going?” I asked Serge. “One would think you were going to kidnap someone.”

“No, we are going twenty miles from here to Kong Chen Tchiao. Once upon a time it was a foreign Concession. The Japanese alone have retained any rights, which are limited to a few houses.”

Towards midnight we crossed a large, high bridge somewhat like the Rialto Bridge in Venice in shape, but a Rialto Bridge without houses, and we came into a broad, busy street, badly lighted, traversed by narrow streets from which came sailors with girls on their arms, evidently leaving houses of ill fame. For prostitution

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has for its setting this strange quarter bathed in moonlight, reeking with noisome odours, echoing with shrill songs on all sides from gramophones hidden away among the stalls, accompanying the nocturnal commerce of fruit, kisses, opium and fugitive passion.

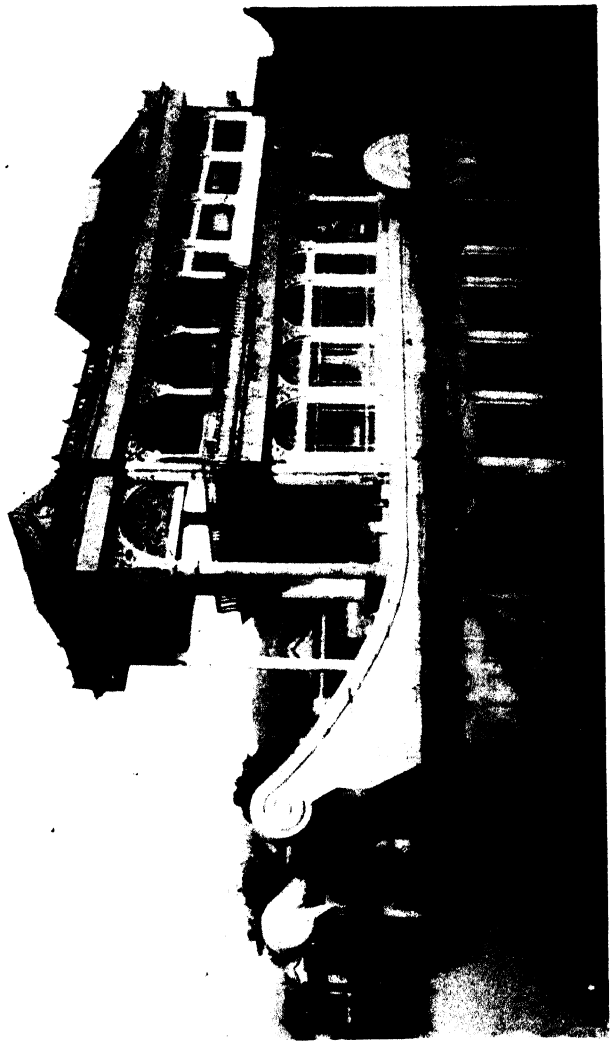
"Will you take a stroll down the street?" asked the prince, "whilst Mr. Shih and myself go into the *House of Sweet Amours*, where we have an appointment with a man who is setting out for the frontier of Fu-kien and Kiang-si, who will act as our go-between and will try to do some satisfactory business for us. . . ."

Serge and Mr. Shih disappeared with an amah who conducted them through a labyrinth of silent streets to the *House of Sweet Amours*. I went back into the broad street and had the opportunity of witnessing a spectacle which in itself alone was worth the nocturnal outing.

In front of the sombre shops, where some Chinese bargained at great length, prostitutes walked up and down accompanied by their faithful duennas.

The courtesan's amah is often her adopted mother. She has bought the child with her savings and at fifteen years of age exploits her talents as much as possible. Nothing is more curious than to observe the strategy of these women, who act according to no rule.

At Shanghai, in the previous month, I had



THE MARBLE BOAT AT THE SUMMER PALACE : PEKIN.



### *The Games of Love and of Death*

witnessed the spectacle which is enacted each evening in the Avenue Edward VII, the left side of which belongs to the International Concession and the right side to the French Concession. All the girls, in long silk dresses, were walking on the left-hand pavement. None ventured on to the right, where the French police, more severe, do not allow this traffic. I have even seen a young Chinese, who, worried by a beauty of the night, had no other means of escape than taking refuge in our Concession.

At Kong Chen Tchiao, a paradise of sellers of "dreams," they carry on their business to their hearts' content. I was the interested spectator of the hunt of a young man about thirty years old, chased by two women assisted by their amahs—two women in divided skirts showing their white silk stockings. A stag hunted by hounds does not make off more rapidly. Trapped between two stalls, he parleyed with his huntresses, who were dragging him along. They were no longer just Venuses, but two Asiatic Messalinas worrying their prey. He got away. They caught him again and the negotiations were punctuated with laughter until the man, at length vanquished, was cornered.

At this moment the sound of a noisy band, unexpected at this hour, pierced the dark night. An improvised dance, no doubt, I thought. But I discovered that it came from an ill-lighted

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

fruiterer's, where the greengrocer sold bananas and pineapples to music. A sheet was stretched across the entrance between two posts. I had the curiosity to examine more closely. I found a corpse lying on a bed that had been placed there. It was the proprietor of the shop, who, in the morning, had given up the ghost, in spite of the exorcisms of the charlatans summoned to his bedside.

A white paper covered his head so that no pernicious breath should come from his mouth. A small wooden cask covered his feet. Seated on the side of the bed was a professional mourner dressed in white, hired at the recognized price of fifty cents a day, lamenting with such sincerity that the mourning of the others seemed cold and half-hearted. He kept repeating: "*Won la! Sen la!*" (It is the end! He is dead!), but it did not interfere with the banana trade.

In front of the mourner, who wailed under the pale light of an acetylene lamp hanging from the ceiling, there was a little table on which had been put food for the departed—tea, his chopsticks and rice—in a corner of the shop, the first *taëls* of silver paper that would be burnt the next day, according to the immemorial custom, in order that the gods should keep him from harm in his future life.

The fanfare ceased, conversation continued in

### *The Games of Love and of Death*

a low voice in the shop where old women, indifferent to death, sold oranges, while two or three urchins from about five to ten years old were quite ignorant of the presence of their dead grandfather.

On going out of the shop, just in front of the hanging sheet I saw a girl with black curly hair, a little flat nose, eyes heavy with her vicious life, who, to an interested passer-by, told the details of her voluptuous talents. Love cheek by jowl with death. And this time no longer is the imaginative brain of a poet in search of violent contrasts in the dusty surroundings of an out-of-date romance, but a stark reality in an out-of-the-way quarter in the suburbs of Che-kiang. An unforgettable picture in which a chaotic mixture of sensations were mingled—the sickly smell of decaying fruit, the more pungent emanations of the manure which fed the good earth in the neighbourhood, the delicate fragrance of the joss-sticks and the aggressive perfume of the girl smothered with scent.

Suddenly, Serge's voice rang out behind me :

"What are you looking at that interests you so much?"

I pointed out the corpse and the prostitute. Serge, who is not a Slav for nothing, smiled cynically.

"The Corpse or the Lovers' Meeting! . . . A suitable subject for a clock. Well, in China

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

one is astonished at nothing. The Chinese have no nerves. In that respect they are our superiors. For them, life is a top which spins. Why make a fuss when it stops? One praises the imagination of certain novelists. I am far more interested in these Chinese who, after a good dinner, agree to make important prisoners swallow packets of needles *to see what will happen to them!* ”

Serge gave a laugh like the sudden snapping of four chords of a violincello.

“Ha! ha! Ha! ha! . . . To see what will happen to them! . . . But let us go. We can’t bring the dead to life or lead this girl into the paths of virtue. . . . Let us return to Hang-chow, for the ladies are awaiting us at Peking.”

PART IV

PEKING



## CHAPTER XII

### THE STREET OF THE HOLE IN THE ELEPHANT'S TRUNK

WHEREIN lies the strange charm of Peking? Why, when one has spent several weeks in this empress of Asiatic metropolises, does one wish to stay under the charm of her magic spell? I remember a very short and delightful poem by Kang Po Tsing:

*Swallow!*

*You have returned . . .*

*Are you the same as the one last year?*

Well, every day in Peking one is tempted to ask whether the charm that held its spell over us in the morning is the same as the one in the evening. Peking is a Chinese *grande dame* who has on her embroidered dress the blood and dust of her epic deeds. Her rivals, Chang An in Shan-si or Kaifung in Honan, were flourishing cities when Rome did not exist. However, Peking, their youngest sister, eclipses them with her Tartar antecedents.

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

Like certain women of whom one cannot say whether they are more beautiful dressed in workaday clothes or as royal princesses, just so Peking attracts us under snow when the cold winds from Mongolia covers the battlements of the walls with frost, or under the warm May breezes when the green patches of its quaint quarters stand out amid the brown roofs.

For her stay in Peking, Madame Pao Yu had rented a house. One can, as a matter of fact, for eighty dollars a month have a princely *yamen* with thirty rooms in a quiet *hutung*. These small streets at right angles to the main avenues running north and south are perfectly delightful. Their names are poems: Red Skin Street, Posterior Street, Pigs' Trough Street, Lambs' Wool Street, Kindly Rain Street, Dry Cotton Street, Musty Flour Street, the Street of the Dog's Tail, etc.

When Serge took me into the street of The Hole in the Elephant's Trunk, a narrow, dirty, unpaved little thoroughfare swarming with sleeping rickshaw coolies and itinerant vendors, I could hardly believe that the widow of a general would live there. But in a rough wall we came to a lacquered door. On entering, a youth saluted us, his hands to his breast. They observe the ancient customs at Peking, this Chinese Versailles. We pushed back the wooden screen which, behind every door, prevents the



THE TEMPLE OF THE FIVE HUNDRED BUDDHAS AT PI-YUN-SZU.



### *The Street of the Hole in the Elephant's Trunk*

evil spirits from getting into the house; we crossed a court gay with flowers and rare shrubs surrounded by one-storied buildings—the greater part of the houses in Peking have only one story—and came to a room furnished in ebony in Cantonese style and filled with priceless curios.

The owner was a literary man who specialized in specimens of handwriting, examples of which were hanging on the wall. Chinese writing is very decorative and is conducive to the exhibition of poetic devices in which the characters balance each other. I saw, for example, on each side of a Coromandel side-board two little symbolical poems, of five characters each, by Mr. Yu Yo Jen, which, literally translated, ran as follows:

TO READ  
THE BOOK  
TENDS  
TO MELT  
THE ICE

ON TAKING  
A BRUSH  
THE DEW  
BEGINS  
TO FALL

Madame Pao Yu had not yet arrived. But Mr. C. H. Fong, the excellent scribe, was waiting for Serge, to give him his Chinese lesson. Whilst the prince translated an easy piece, Mr. Fong asked me jokingly:

“Do you want to learn Chinese in twenty-four hours?”

“Certainly. However, will you give me forty-eight?”

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

"You think I am joking? But I assure you quite seriously that Chinese is not so difficult to learn as you Western people think. Obviously, you will not learn in twenty-four hours the ten thousand characters of our language, nor the innumerable meanings of each of these words, nor the hundred dialects, which vary according to the district. Several human lives would not be long enough. But get these facts into your mind. . . ."

Mr. Fong took his brush and his writing-paper.

"Our chief characters are something like the Egyptian hieroglyphics. The signs represent the things themselves. There are hundreds of them. A circle with a dot represents the sun. A crescent the moon. Three peaks, a mountain. Six drops one above the other, water. A little man is shown by two arms and two legs; a man, etc. . . . In fifty centuries, writing has become simplified, and composite words are formed. With many concrete signs abstract ideas have been expressed."

"Give us some examples."

"Peace is a roof over a woman. . . . Between ourselves, peace in our grandfathers' time ought to have been more calm than the *Paix chez soi* of your dear Courteline. . . ."

"In any case it is flattering to the woman."

"Certainly, but not so flattering when we

### *The Street of the Hole in the Elephant's Trunk*

write the word obscenity with the sign of three women! On the other hand, wife is written: a woman with a broom. . . . Happiness is a man, a mouth and a field. The man who can speak of *his* field is happy. Love is written: a roof and a heart. A present is expressed as the object of politeness. . . . *To ask*, is a door with a mouth; on the other hand, *to listen* is a door with an ear."

"And the word *family*? "

"Very simple. A roof over a pig. . . . Enough said, eh? Now let us take the adjective *bright* or *pure*. It is made up of the root *shui* (water) and the word *tsing* (bright blue). When the water is blue and clear, it is pure. The verb to burn? Draw the character *hou* (fire), and above the sign of wood, twice (*mou*). When there is a fire under two pieces of wood, the chances are they will burn! "

"There are many characters which themselves alone express the morale of the people. Take the word *sing*, which means 'faithful to his word.' It is made up of the signs *jen* (man) and *yen* (word). The word *wou* (brave) is made up of two characters, *tchi* (to stop) and *k'o* (a lance). A brave man must stop the weapon of his enemy. Do you know how one writes uncommon words like *algebra* or *subconscious*? The first is written with signs 'instead of figures,' and the second, 'beyond knowing.' "

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

“How many characters must one learn to know Chinese?”

“In the days of Confucius there were ten thousand. The ‘Thirteen Books’ contain about six thousand. The old book of characters, the ‘Shue Wen,’ has nine thousand. The modern dictionary of a college student has only seven thousand five hundred, and the official code of the Chinese B.B.C., nine thousand six hundred. But one must add that many of these words are used very little. In the print of a leading Chinese newspaper, the printers class the characters into two categories: words commonly used and words rarely used. The first number about eight hundred. The others, six thousand! . . . A Chinese newspaper can only be set up by hand. Well, with the exception of technical and scientific words, one hardly uses two thousand characters, which represent a goodly number of cases. Unfortunately, for the beginner, the same character has many meanings, just as you have a different spelling for *weigh*, *way*, *wey*. More, even, than that, the same character with us can have four to six various intonations which need a musical ear to differentiate. And then, the supreme difficulty, the pronunciation of each character varies with the hundred dialects. Take note, then, of the last strange peculiarity. In such a rich language there is no ‘r.’ . . . Your name, as you know, is written: ‘De-ko-ba-la.’”



THE GATE OF CHIEN MEN.



### *The Street of the Hole in the Elephant's Trunk*

And Mr. Fong, who is also a humorist, added in conclusion:

"As I said just now, Chinese is not at all difficult. It is only after the first twenty years of study that one realizes that one is only at the beginning."

My charming professor withdrew to correct Serge's exercise when Madame Pao Yu appeared in the little garden between two stone griffons. She was more beautiful than ever, so brown, in her rose-pink silk, edged with leaves beautifully toned. Her arms bare to the elbow—modesty is one of the most noble Chinese qualities—her ivory-coloured arms were ornamented tastefully with coralline bracelets.

She exclaimed:

"Ah, well! How do you like my home in this tiny street of the little hole of the big trunk of the huge elephant?"

"Your Peking houses are surprise packets. One expects a hovel and one finds a palace."

"Listen, I have arranged a programme for to-morrow. We will lunch at ten o'clock in the morning at the Grand Marmite Restaurant in the Temple of Heaven Road. We will go by car to the Eunuchs' House. We shall have tea after having seen the mummified Buddhist priests; we will dine at a Mongol restaurant and finish up at the theatre. . . . And I will introduce you to Colonel Hilda Ying, who will go with us."

*Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

“ A colonel? . . . Did she get her rank during the war? ”

“ No. She was a general's secretary, who promoted her to this rank because she chose the dresses for his concubines so cleverly.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### CHINESE GASTRONOMY

ON the way back from Tien-tsin, that imposing Temple of Heaven full of pre-Buddhistic memories, where the primitive ancestors of the teachers of the doctrines of Sun Yat Sen used to bow their heads to the ground at the imperial sacrifices, Madame Pao Yu ordered the car to stop at the Restaurant Grand Marmite.

It was in this historic restaurant, unknown to white people, that she had arranged to meet the lady colonel. The Grand Marmite, as a matter of fact, goes back to the Ming Dynasty, the time of Louis XIII. The high dignitaries who used to go at dawn in palanquins to take part in the ceremonies of the Temple of Heaven, stopped there on returning and satisfied their hunger with a pig killed at sunrise. When it was entirely eaten, about eleven o'clock, the proprietor shut up the establishment.

While eating pigs' ears, made tender by being well beaten before being cooked and sprinkled with petals of chrysanthemums, we made the

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

acquaintance of one of the best conversationalists of Northern China; Mr. Liou, expert in good living, and a poet in his spare time. He played with a paradox as skilfully as he manipulated his chopsticks and spoke perfect English. These Chinese literary gentlemen, lovers of verse, are as delightful companions as one could wish to meet.

“If you are interested in Chinese cooking, of which you have only a vague idea,” he said to us, “read the cookery book by Yuan Nei written in the Tsing epoch. This poet lived in the days of the Emperor Kien Long and was sub-prefect of Nankin. Mr. Monestier, editor of the *Politics of Peking*, had the happy thought of publishing it. You will discover that we have had our Brillat-Savarin, and that there are only two nations in the world who understand the art of eating—the French and the Chinese. All the rest merely satisfy hunger.

Mr. Liou, to honour us, as he said, took up with his chopsticks, already having put them in his mouth, two thin slices of ear and placed them delicately in our saucers. He got up to use the spittoon near the door and then went on with his dissertation.

“Yuan Nei has laid down basic facts that every gourmet will appreciate. He says that all foods have their good points as all men have theirs. For example, the pig should have thin

## *Chinese Gastronomy*

skin and not be too fat. The *tchi* fish should be flat with a white belly. In a good meal the cook has sixty per cent. of the credit, but he who buys the food deserves forty per cent. of it, because of his choice of the provisions. Eel, turtle, crab, beef and mutton need no sauces, because they have personality. In Nankin they season sharks' fins with crushed crab powder. . . . That is redundancy. It is like a poet who writes—wet water! ”

“ And what about fish, Mr. Liou? ” asked Madame Pao Yu, raising her goblet to our Great Gourmet.

“ Fish, madame, should be white as jade and its flesh as firm as the thighs of a Mongol maid. Do not forget that fish ought to be pleasing to the smell as well as to the taste and sight. A nice colour is given—I was going to say a pretty tint—to fish by dipping it in sugar. You know, madame, but our friend from France is perhaps unaware, that a real Chinese dinner consists of a hundred dishes and takes three days to prepare. One is not satisfied, as they say, to eat with one's ears. An attractive name is not enough to assure the success of a dish. Again, one ought not to eat merely with the eyes. A display of forty-five dishes badly cooked is not worth as much as half a dozen cooked with skill.

“ Our Brillat-Savarin advises us also not to handle the food too much. Why serve swallows'

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

nests like bullets? Do not talk to me about autumn root *galettes* or of jade orchid cakes. . . . These dishes have lost their vogue. Our famous swallows' nests ought to be treated like newly-weds. They should be cooked in rain water and the outside covering removed with a silver skewer. There are people who serve thin slices of chicken with them. What heresy! Would you think, monsieur, of using vulgar oaths in a sonnet on April plum blossoms in a beautiful park? "

" And the sharks' fins? "

" Ah! The sharks' fins! Also an aphrodisiac. You will notice that that is one of the features of our cuisine. The object of eating well leads to living well. Sharks' fins ought to simmer for two days with ham, chicken broth, young bamboo points and sugar-candy. It is a good plan to serve beforehand little Ning-po fish, which are like your shrimps. They should be dipped in eggs that have been beaten; the whole makes a delicious paste. And, speaking of shrimps, have you ever eaten drunken shrimps? "

" What? "

" Oh, it is very simple. You get nice shrimps alive from the sea. You plunge them entire into a mixture of warm wine and a little *soja*. When a man is intoxicated, his nose is red. When a shrimp is intoxicated, its tail is yellow. That is

## *Chinese Gastronomy*

the time to put an end to his drunkenness by crunching him up as he is. Try it and tell me how you like it."

"I have been told also of monkeys' brains."

"Ah, yes! . . . An old Cantonese dish. You put a little iron collar round the skull of the live monkey and break open the skull with a sharp blow of a hammer. Between ourselves, I don't care to eat it."

"Why?"

"It gives me the feeling of committing sacrilege by eating the brain of an ancestor who has taken the wrong turning. . . . But to come back to Chinese cuisine, if ever you happen to be in Peking, don't forget to tell your cook to serve you pears from Tche Fou, grapes and Peking ducks, Corean apples, *lichi* from Fu-kien, dragons' eyes from Canton and Yun-nan ham."

"You will find it rather dear," observed Madame Pao Yu, "but your cook will not squeeze you any the more for it. . . . The marketing basket has no country, and we have no reason to be envious of Europe. I happened to dine yesterday with a diplomat in the Legation Quarter who told me an amusing story. He has for a boy a fine, chubby-cheeked fellow, as round as a ball, who breathes optimism. The diplomat said to him one fine morning:

"'Boy, you are as fat as a quail. You must be squeezing me to get as fat as that!'

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

“ ‘No, no, master! . . . Me no need to squeeze you, because master pays me well. . . . Me am not like the boy of Master X, who has a yellow face and is very thin. . . .’

“ ‘Why?’

“ ‘Because he keeps awake every night thinking how he can manage to squeeze his master next day!’ ”

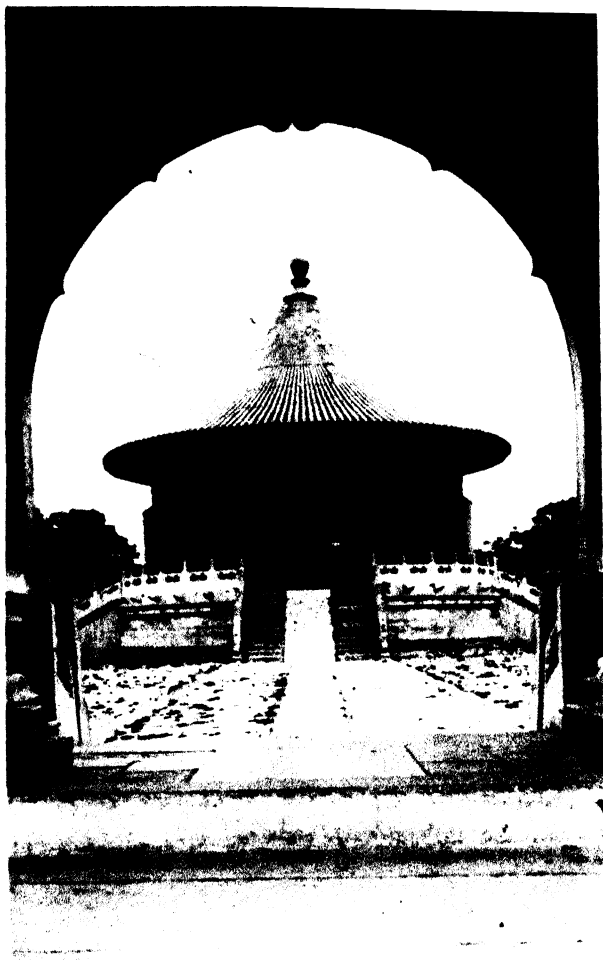
“ ‘Anyway, dear madame, the skill of your Chinese cooks is admirable. You tell them without any warning at five o’clock: ‘Boy, I want dinner for twelve persons at eight!’ And your boy overcomes all obstacles with supreme dexterity. He borrows the *soja* from one friend, ducks from another, dishes from a third, and you may rest assured that your dinner will be on the table to time. A European lady told me, under the seal of secrecy, a good example of the system on the part of her boy. He had a large fish to cook for dinner. At half-past eight the fish duly appeared on the table. The next day the lady complimented him, asking with curiosity:

“ ‘But how did you manage to cook that large fish yesterday evening? You have not got a turbot-kettle?’ ”

“ ‘He replied with a knowing smile:

“ ‘Quite easily, madame! I found a suitable utensil on four legs in the bathroom!’ ”

Our conversation was interrupted by the



THE TEMPLE OF ANCESTORS : PEKIN.



## *Chinese Gastronomy*

arrival of Colonel Hilda Ying, who was wearing a russet-brown dress trimmed with zibeline; for the weather was cold. She was a beautiful Canton girl, barely twenty-five years old, with a camelia-like complexion, merry eyes and tiny hands. She looked like a dainty doll, and the title colonel suited her about as much as a drum would suit the wife of a doge.

A little flurried, she told us that she had had her lunch and that we should be late for the reception at the eunuchs' if we did not start at once. On the advice of Mr. Liou, she emptied a small glass of cognac at a gulp and hurried us along.

"We must not keep the eunuchs waiting."

Mr. Liou said something to her in Chinese which made the ladies laugh. Madame Pao Yu translated, whispering it in my ear:

"He said it did not matter. The eunuchs have been waiting all their lives."

We got into the car and went off in the direction of Pao Ma Chan.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE EUNUCHS

THE roads are bad around Peking. The one which leads to the race-course is a track covered with ruts. On a lower level, another track is used by camels, in long convoys, that carry coal from the neighbouring mines. Arriving at Pao Ma Chan, we had to leave our car and go on horse-back to reach the pagoda of Huo Kouo Sze, where the eunuchs reside, near by Pao Sao Shan, the Mountain of the Eight Precious Things.

This pagoda, surrounded by low buildings, is like all others on this yellow ochre soil, which gives the country of Chihli its peculiar colour.

We were received by the doyen of the eunuchs, a huge, fat man with a full face, but as wrinkled as an old woman's. He received us with customary politeness and explained to us the origin of the pagoda dedicated to the glorious memory of General Kang Koung, eunuch and chief of the army which, in the thirteenth century, defeated the Manchurians. He was slain

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

not far from there. In one of the courts there is a tablet engraved by Li Lien Ying, the favourite eunuch of Tsou Hsi, the last empress, with an inscription immortalizing his great and heroic deeds. He showed us, also, marble slabs commemorating the visits of the emperors to the pagoda, and invited us to take tea in the temple under the unmoved gaze of the tutelary deities.

About fifteen retired eunuchs are housed there. They work in the fields and live on the produce of their labours, keeping buffaloes and poultry. The Republic ignores them, but they recall the ancient splendours of the Imperial Court.

Our host related to his visitors recollections of that splendid epoch.

"We were very numerous at the palace and there were always plenty of candidates for a vacancy. We were twenty years old and, as a rule, a friend, already installed, had us castrated. When our number needed replenishing, forty men were chosen. Her Majesty the Dowager Empress had the first choice of the forty; then came the Empress, and last of all the Emperor. . . . I—I was chosen by the Dowager Empress, and to complete my education I was handed over to one of the comptrollers. I had to learn to arrange the furniture in Her Majesty's private apartments; learn to fill her august pipe; learn

## *The Eunuchs*

also to act in the theatre. In 1900, that tragic epoch, we were the first to know of the rebellion of I Ho Ch'nan (the Boxers) and the murder of the English missionary, Brooks, which happened on the very last day of the year 1899. I remember the delight of the Empress when she heard that her favourite, Tung Fu Hsiang, was hurrying from Kan-su with his bold cavalry to massacre the Europeans. You know the rest. The siege of the Legations. Their deliverance. I followed His Majesty, who fled to Shanghai. These happenings had upset the Court. When peace was signed with the powers, the corps of eunuchs was reformed. I am speaking figuratively, of course! You have seen the palace buildings. In each of them there are two comptrollers and four chefs. At that time I became Little Eunuch, and seven years later I was promoted to the third grade and a Spokesman. That meant that I was qualified to receive verbal messages from Viceroys and carry them to Her Majesty along with her letters."

"Were there no women in the palace?"

"Yes. There were seven personal attendants to the Empress, and twenty-one wardrobe-mistresses. The Emperor also had four women in his service."

"You must have witnessed many dramatic moments that have escaped the pen of journalists?"

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

"Our duty was to know how to speak and to learn how to hold our tongues. Do you know what happens to an imprudent tongue? It is cut off."

Apropos of mutilation, one may remark, by the way, that Chinese eunuchs carefully keep what they lose in order that they may be buried entire anatomically. It is well known that the worst thing that can befall a Chinaman would be to set out for The Beyond with an incomplete body.

"In short, yours was a redoubtable position," remarked the colonel.

The old eunuch, who had become very philosophical in the course of his career, tucked his wrinkled hands into his voluminous, fur-edged sleeves and gave us a definition that all courtesans would do well to take to heart:

"To serve an emperor is to sleep between a tiger's paws."

"There must have been tremendous rivalry amongst the various people in the palace!"

"Yes, indeed! I myself was a victim of their back-biting. But hasn't someone said: 'Calumny does not harm a virtuous man.' After the flood, the rock reappears."

Madame Pao Yu looked at me, nodding her head.

"This man may be incomplete, but he has enough sense for two!"



THE SUPPRESSION OF THE COMMUNISTS  
AT CANTON IN 1927.



THE PARIAHS OF HANGKOW.



## *The Eunuchs*

Our visit came to an end. We said good-bye to the eunuchs and set off northward from Peking to see, as we went, the pagoda of the dried-up Buddhist priests. Dried-up bonzes is not, in this case, a figure of speech. It is an absolute fact. They are kept in wooden boxes. They allow themselves, little by little, to die of hunger, so that instead of becoming putrified, their corpse just dries up. It is a kind of natural mummification.

Behind the temple, we went into a dark room where, by the light of a torch, we found, on the hard ground, about thirty heavy oaken boxes in which the dead are preserved. On opening one of them the dried face of a bonze was exposed, surrounded by a halo of dusty straw. The keeper of the temple suggested that we should see the most recent of his dead. He lifted the lid of another, new-looking box and this time showed us a frightful grinning face which made Colonel Ying cry out with terror.

The bonze, still young, seated in hay, had only been dead three weeks. His half-opened eyes, with up-turned pupils, seemed to implore the visitor's help, whilst the grin on his pale lips, drawn back from his teeth, appeared to scoff at the pity of charitable persons. This delusion was like the vision of a damned soul suffering in his constricted prison.

"Let us go!" exclaimed the colonel. "If I

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

look at this laughing corpse much longer I shall never again be able to read a humorous book! ”

The same evening, to try to forget these sights, we dined at the Mongol Restaurant. It is one of the dirtiest and most picturesque in Peking. One hardly knows whether one is going into a blacksmith's shop or a room full of dirty cloths and greasy pots. In the interior courtyard, open to the sky, there is a fire under a dome in the shape of a bent gridiron. It is there that people come from the neighbouring alcoves to cook their slices of mutton under the stars, with their backs pierced by a cold wind and one's face scorched by the fire. Armed with a long trident, everyone grills their slices of red meat and then eats them with a kind of pancake. It is a true banquet for civilized people who, for a few minutes, go back six thousand years in the history of the human race and appease their hunger as did their ancestors in the Stone Age.

The colonel handled her trident with care, being anxious not to dirty her fur coat. She remarked:

“ You can fancy yourself with the Mongols in the time of Gengis Khan, can't you? Ah! What a charming epoch! . . . The delightful savagery of these people let loose upon the world like a terrible tornado. A soldier-friend of mine told me, the other day, of a very curious custom which, it seems, still obtains amongst the

### *The Eunuchs*

Mongols. They say that one must never drink anything cold after love-making. Well, when a Mongol offers hospitality to a stranger and he has slept in his tent near his wife, a Mongol, on awakening, offers his guest a bowl of iced water. If he drinks it without hesitation, the host is sure of the correctness of his behaviour."



## CHAPTER XV

### THE THIEVES' MARKET

PEKING is a magnificent brocade alive with vermin. Nothing is more interesting than to stroll along those streets where thousands of artificers offer the results of their labours. Travellers who are in a hurry to do the Temple of the Lamas, the Mings and the Jade Fountain—I do not mention the Great Wall, where one risks just now being kidnapped by brigands—travellers in a hurry, do you know that in the north of Hataman there is a narrow street, the Street of the Bowmen, where bows are made just as in the olden days? The peasant from Tchi-li and Ho-nan is not rich enough to buy a rifle. So he kills birds and hares with a bow and arrow.

What can be more interesting than to stroll about for days with a well-informed Chinaman, his eyes wide open and his ears alert; to watch the fur-traders in Pan Pi Chieng Street, the antique dealers in Lu-li-chang, the clever

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

quacks of Jade Street, the sellers of lanterns, the artists in martins' feathers, the booksellers in Library Street, where one can have a seal of rock-crystal engraved in twenty-four hours?

Thanks to the sharp ears of Mr. Liou, we overheard the confidences of gossips; momentary cameos of the life of the people. In this book-seller's back shop an elderly scholar, with a white pointed beard of the old regime, was reading the fantastic tales of "The Country of the Flying Heads," this marvellous country of Chinese folk-lore where heads fly by night with their ears as wings and feed on worms and crabs in lonely ponds. In front of the door, at the end of this cul-de-sac, a father, mindful of tradition, had hung a bow, the sign of the birth of a boy. A napkin announces a girl.

That morning we had gone to a tea-house where idlers kill time sipping the green beverage. A bird belonging to one of the customers was singing in its little wooden cage on the table. A Chinaman who, with the indifference of a retired executioner, will watch a man being beheaded, is as tender as a father towards his favourite bird. Our neighbour, an elderly man, told a story which made his partner laugh. Mr. Liou listened and translated it for me as follows:

"It was about an ex-mandarin of a fallen



A PAGODA ON THE WESTERN HILLS ON THE  
OUTSKIRTS OF PEKIN.



### *The Thieves' Market*

dynasty. Mr. Pou is sixty-eight and is offered a concubine for one thousand eight hundred dollars; a concubine formerly a sing-song girl at Tien-tsin—Mademoiselle Kiao. At the end of two years Mr. Pou looked askance at his pretty concubine because she had not presented him with a child, which would have been, in fact, a proof of her fidelity. For, as everyone knows, one is always a father at sixty-eight years of age. . . . Mr. Pou, therefore, bought another concubine for a thousand dollars. She gave him a son. Old Mr. Pou began to show marked affection towards Madame Number Two to the detriment of Madame Number One. The two ladies were very soon at daggers drawn. Monday evening, on returning home, he found them busily tearing each other's hair out. He blamed Number One. But she, who was a kind of fox with nine tails, treated Mr. Pou with contempt and shut him out of her room. The prudent Mr. Pou then tried to throw the blame on Number Two. As she had a nasty disposition, she made unpleasant remarks about the virtue of Mr. Pou's mother, who had been buried long ago in the hills of the west, and she also shut her room door against her lord and master. This went on for five nights. Mr. Pou, very upset, was obliged to sleep on the floor between the two bolted doors of his two angry concubines."

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

Mr. Liou cleaned his spectacles with the edge of his long sleeve and ended:

"If I saw these two ladies, I should advise them to live in peace, because without knowing Mr. Pou, I will wager that before long he will end the quarrel by buying a third concubine, who will probably present him with twin boys!"

Mr. Liou stopped to point out to me an aged lady who was walking with tiny steps owing to her pinched feet.

"There goes a procuress, very well known near the Tung Pien Men Gate. . . . She trades in young girls. For thirty dollars she buys a girl of eight from working people who are poor and only too happy to get rid of this useless mouth. She places her in a house, keeps her there for five years, and when she is thirteen she is of value to Madame Souen. For two hundred dollars, she will supply you with a nice girl of fifteen, daughter of peasants, who will become your property, like your walking-stick or your hat. She will live in your house like a docile slave and will deceive you with your boy. . . . For a thousand dollars she will find you a well-bred beauty who will be faithful to you, because a woman bought at that price cannot be indiscreet with a servant. One must save one's face, sir! . . . Ah! The face in China is the mainspring of many acts. It is the great idea of the Chinese,

## *The Thieves' Market*

as your philosopher, Alfred Fouillée, says. . . . When you offer me a present, you give me great pleasure, but above all you give me face to my friends. . . . Yesterday evening, at the Mongol Restaurant, the waiter to whom I paid the bill shouted out into the court so that everyone could hear:

“ ‘ Monsieur has been generous up to five dollars! ’

“ He gave himself face to the cooks. He also gave me face to the public. . . . Madame Pao Yu told us the other day that her boy Number One is as great a liar as a charlatan. She knows, however, that a lie is concerned with face. Suppose you find that your pearl shirt stud has vanished. You are sure that your boy has taken it. You tax him with it. He stoutly denies it, although the pearl may be concealed in the cuff of his sleeve. You threaten to dismiss him forthwith. He searches the house from top to bottom and suddenly returns with a dirty shirt. In the front of it he has just put your pearl. He has saved his face. Thousands of Chinese die every year to save their faces.”

It is five o'clock in the morning. In the darkness the stars twinkle and the Silver River—that is the Chinese name for the Milky Way—traces its path of light across the sky. An icy wind blows through the Forbidden City. Mr. Liou

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

is taking me to the Thieves' Market, held in the Chinese town outside the walls of the Tartar city.

Beyond the Chien Men Gate the road is almost deserted. One says almost, because at all hours of the night one meets, in Chinese cities, people who, apparently, never sleep. After a long ride in a rickshaw, we go through dark, narrow streets with closed shops, dirty stalls, warehouses and sheds. It is like a rag-pickers' quarter.

From time immemorial there has been in Peking a Thieves' Market. A market more or less legitimate, dealers more or less honest; goods more or less stolen are sold between nightfall and the first signs of sunrise. In less than an hour these crooked merchants will have got up from their pitches and disappeared.

These men arrive one by one with lanterns and packs. They hurry along the walls like hunted rats. They unwrap their packages, lay out their wares, squat in silence awaiting a buyer. It is a veritable court of miracles. There are old, toothless women, human monsters, old shrews who gaze at the indescribable bric-à-brac, with murderous-looking boys with restless, foxy faces who unwrap with caution a clock, a statuette, a vase, an alarm clock made in Japan, a silver spoon, a bicycle saddle or an old set of false teeth. All has been stolen, sent to the receiver,



THE AUTHOR AND THE HEAD OF THE EUNUCHS  
AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE.



## *The Thieves' Market*

and from the receiver finds its way into this clandestine market.

We felt bound to take part in the dealings of these people. This man with wrinkled eyes and murderer's thumbs is holding in his hand a little gilt clock which he offers to a passer-by. They trade in silence. One does not speak out aloud here. Everything is done by signs. The purchaser appears to shake hands with the seller. It is not a form of salute, it is a code. A finger is a unit—a dollar. The purchaser has put two fingers in the dealer's hand; he replies by a pressure of five fingers. He is asking five dollars for his clock. The purchaser's hand falls. With an electric pocket lamp he lights up the article, scrutinizes it and handles it. Another handshake—three fingers! Reply—four fingers. The purchaser goes away, comes back and begins again. He will only pay three fingers and a bent finger—that is to say, three dollars fifty.

Every imaginable thing is sold here. How can one describe the display of these wretched articles in this strange quarter where one can see, in the lim light of their lanterns, on the patched ground-sheets, objects that baffle description: a saucer full of odd false teeth, empty and dented tins, chicken bones, sardine-tin keys, bent nails, old rags in little heaps, a pair of field-glasses without lenses, an india-rubber syringe (very dirty, of course), a knife handle

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

without a blade. One wonders who would offer even a few cents for these old damaged teeth or that india-rubber spray (broken, of course). One also wonders by what miracle this gilt sedan-chair without windows got there. It stands against the wall, serving as an improvised shelter for the policeman who sleeps among these peaceful robbers.

The dawn had broken, throwing her pale light on the narrow streets of the market! Already the "rats" were preparing to get away. Mr. Liou drank a cup of hot tea served by an itinerant merchant and said:

"Many stolen articles are sold here. But do not imagine that all of them are. There are ruined families or those in trouble who part with articles that have some value. They sell them in this way on the quiet to save their faces."

Mr. Liou gave two cents to a bookstall-keeper and added:

"You remember I told you that face is more precious to the Chinaman than his daily ration of rice. The other day I was told of the case of a simple artisan who was married and had two daughters. Disappointed, he bought at a cheap price a poor girl whom he made his second wife. Again he had two daughters. Furious, he treated his two wives like worthless china. Because pottery is a girl, whilst jade, a precious

### *The Thieves' Market*

stone, is a boy. The man in question was soon the laughing-stock of his neighbours. So do you know what he did? He killed himself rather than live in such dishonour. He had saved his face."



## CHAPTER XVI

### PEKING—A CITY OF VIRTUE

Do not imagine that Peking is the Babylon of the Chinese Republic. Peking, under the rule of its mayor, Mr. Yuan Liang, has experienced, for some months, an era of Puritanism which would rejoice the hearts of the Quakers of Boston and all the Blue Crosses of New England.

Formerly—that is to say, before the war, and even from 1921 to 1928, during the period of the “fat kine”—Peking was a gay capital where society scandals alternated with the wild deeds of wrinkle-eyed Casanovas. On beautiful autumn nights the roof of the Grand Hotel witnessed the idylls of the Diplomatic Corps. East and West met under the sign of the Chinese Moon in which, according to the legend, lives Chang Ngo, the captivating wife of a famous warrior who, two thousand five hundred years before our days, stole the elixir of immortality and hid herself in the planet from where she smiles at us to-day.

These wonderful days have passed. Tourists

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

have become rare. And to add to the misfortune, Mr. Yuan Liang has done everything to turn his town into a monastery. The police have cleared away the Chinese and Russian taxi girls who used to cheer up the dance-halls. Further, he has issued a *ukase* governing the profession of the tea-house girls. The ladies who used to keep the customers company must nowadays be registered at the police station and leave there their finger-prints; they must not indulge in unbecoming jokes with the customers and must behave with dignity in their private interviews with them; and in addition they must be dressed in cotton (a chaste fabric) and must not linger in the *cabinets particulier*.

Because, since his victory over Miss Precious Jade, the actress, whom he expelled from Peking, and encouraged by his success, he has sworn to prosecute his policy—and that in spite of the protests from Nankin. But it is very probable that he has obtained there the approval of Yuan, the Controller; this man does not trifle with virtue, if one may judge from a sharp warning that he gave to a gallant Vice-Minister who had been seen too often in Shanghai in the company of Miss Butterfly Hou, the well-known star.

At half-past eleven in the evening Peking is dead—at least so far as reputable people are concerned. The five large Chinese cinemas empty their houses, and the theatres, which change

## *Peking—A City of Virtue*

their programmes every day, give short performances.

One evening, with Serge, Nella, Madame Pao Yu and Colonel Hilda Ying, we went to the performance of two classical plays entitled "The Kiosk of the Imperial Table" and "The Suspicious Slipper." The most celebrated Chinese actor, Mei Lan Fang, an artist of supreme talent, played the part of Ying Chun, the wife of the general who waits eighteen years for the return of her husband who has gone to the war. This man, in order to put his wife's fidelity to the test, comes back with a false beard, flirts with her and discovers, with deep distress, a pair of man's slippers under her bed. The wife, to tease this importunate person, tells him that they are the slippers of a person whom she dearly loves. The general then learns with horror that they belong to his son, born shortly after his departure. Well, he has just accidentally killed this youth, seventeen years of age, with an arrow. He reveals the tragedy to his wife, who faints. Curtain.

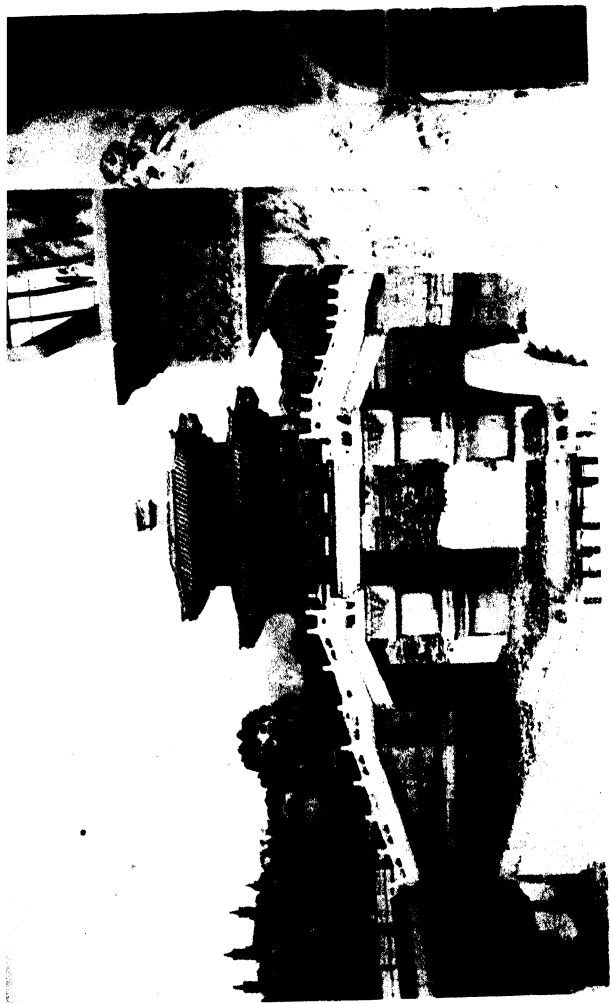
Our neighbours, very affected and excited, every now and then caught hot, damp serviettes as they were thrown, tossed with skill by the programme-sellers hidden under the balconies. The Chinese theatre, in fact, holds many surprises for Western visitors. To begin with, deafening music fills in the silence with the tom-

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

toms and the clanging of the cymbals, which almost splits your ear-drums. There is the unexpected presence of two stage-hands who work whilst the actors are performing. When one of the actors has finished a long tirade, he is offered a glass of tea, with which he gargles, his back turned to the audience. The children of the leading actor sit in arm-chairs against the back cloth, between the two traditional doors, and wait quietly until their papa has finished ranting through his tragic part.

At midnight everything is over and Peking is asleep. Without wishing to disillusion its excellent mayor, let us say, rather, that Peking only sleeps with one eye shut, for the houses of pleasure, where numbers of Chinese dispense with their superfluous dollars, are not shut. These houses are classified. They are lit up in the evening with the perpendicular *hutungs* at Hatamen; the Street of a Hundred Chances or the Street of Widow Wang, for instance, have hanging in front of their façades green boards with brass letters. One can read in this way that at *The House of Happiness* or *The House of Two Joys* one can meet Miss Heavenly Dream and Miss Supreme Good Luck. Because, in China, even the ladies whose professions are without any romance have charming names, suggesting pure sentiments and poetical effusions.

One enters the courtyard. A gallant fellow in



A BRIDGE AT THE SUMMER PALACE : PEKIN



## *Peking—A City of Virtue*

a black robe, the official introducer, gives forth a guttural cry which reminds one of the funereal farewell of Musset's pelican. The cry is repeated from court to court by other servitors, and in each room of the ground floor a little hand lifts a curtain to allow to pass a precious painted jade armed with an india-rubber bottle filled with hot water. The visitors go into one of the rooms brilliantly lighted by a lamp of a hundred candle-power. Amahs appear with fruit and tea. Everyone sits down. Girls of ten or twelve years of age come and wander round the table. Other ladies, not invited, arrive out of curiosity, munching dried melon seeds as they come and go. It is not a *tête-à-tête*; it is a large party where the servants have a word to say. The lady chosen by the visitor goes away and returns a quarter of an hour later. Don't imagine that she is busy with somebody else. She does this to make people believe that someone wants her and to give her face. The visitors distribute dollars and go away. Everything is carried on in a most correct manner. If one of the visitors has conceived a secret passion for Precious Jade, he will come many times to pay court before conquering his lady fair.

It is a place where one also hears of a thousand and one unsuspected dramas of the ex-capital. There are the ladies Niao Shiao Léou and Pao Kin Hoa, who tell, with tears in their voices, the

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tragic end of little Feng Shien, who was only thirteen years old and played the part of Tsing Kouang—that is to say, the minor rôle of amusing visitors whilst they are awaiting ladies qualified to receive them. The poor little thing committed suicide through jealousy, and no one bothered to buy her a nice coffin. There is the story of the abduction of a courtesan in Po-hsin Street who, at the age of nineteen, gave her amah and her adopted mother the slip and ran off with an important Government official from Shantung. The enraged amah stirred up the whole district because the little wretch owed her eighty dollars! Then there is the adventure of the wanton bonze who often deserted his Temple of Hai-houei-ché to go and amuse himself with the ladies at *The House of Pure Felicity*. He robbed one of them of fifty dollars and is being looked for by the police. And last of all there is the game of the Thirty-six Beasts, in which a well-known property-owner in the suburbs of Chien Men is concerned.

The game of the Thirty-six Beasts is a sort of confidence trick in China and has existed from time immemorial. Many people allow themselves to be taken in by it. It is played by betting on one of the thirty-six beasts, which consist of the rat, the ox, the tiger, the hare, the dragon, the serpent, etc. Many superstitions are associated with this game. Old women and young

### *Peking—A City of Virtue*

girls will tell you that you are sure to win if you go by your dreams. You dream, for example, of a solitary tree in a field. Don't hesitate; bet on the monkey. If you dream that your shirt has black stripes on it, the tiger is sure to be the winner.

The game is run by the person who keeps the bank, and whose touts bring the bets to his house. You are given a ticket with the amount of your bet and the name of the animal you have chosen. If the animal wins, you get twenty-eight times your stake. But as the drawing is faked, the animal that wins is the one on which the least money has been placed. It is childish, but it succeeds every time. In Shanghai the European police are clearing out the crooks who have a secret organization, with a central office, sub-office and squads of cyclists who take the results to the houses, because there are three drawings a day—at mid-day, at six o'clock and at eleven in the evening.

The Chinese, who love gambling, also play the game of poetry. Literature. What do you think! The lottery ticket is used as a literary competition. Here and there one can read on the right, from top to bottom: "*Not without sacrifice to the general . . .*" On the left, in circles, are written the names Li, Lou, Sie, Ho, Tong. One of them corresponds to the name of the general left blank in the empty space.

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One has to find the right name—that which corresponds to a phrase taken from a classical author. Imagine, for example, a competition where the given phrase would be “. . . *has learnt all and wishes to forget all*,” and in the next column the names of Philippe, Octave, Auguste, Louis, Prosper. It would be in reality an instructive and very commendable pastime.

Mr. Liou suggested one evening that I should descend much lower down the social ladder.

“China does not consist entirely of mandarins and poets, no more than France is made up solely of millionaires and pianists. There are coolies and beggars. The people eat and love like us. If your nerves are not too delicate, and if horrible things attract you, I will prove to you that you can find here, in real life, with characters not made-up, the imaginary story of the ‘Opera d’Quat-Sous.’ ”

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MINSTRELS OF HUNGER

HERE we are in the most sordid quarter on a winter night. We have come with Mr. Liou through little unpaved streets to a badly lighted square surrounded by wretched-looking stalls on which are awful-looking food and soup containing cadaverous-looking vermicelli.

"I have told you that the coolies and the destitute also have their castles in the air. Here is one, in the cul-de-sac. It is called *The River of Water Lilies*. Below that there is nothing. Yes. There is hell! . . . You shall judge for yourself."

Men with heavy rings round their eyes, lantern-jawed individuals with murderous-looking faces, passed us or overtook us. In a rectangular courtyard there were rooms with paper walls with holes in that gave one glimpses of bedrooms lighted by lanterns. At the back of an alcove, a Manchu girl, resting on her couch, looks at us like a resigned animal. Further on, another, in a royal blue cotton robe, is sitting on a stool, her

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chin on the palm of her hand like Rodin's "Penseur." Horrible—the palm has no fingers. The woman is suffering from leprosy, which has taken away all feeling from her extremities. Whilst she was in a lazaretto, rats had eaten away the fingers of her right hand.

Farther on, a miserable imbecile with her hair in a fringe, sitting on her bed, shakes her head spasmodically, and with slow and regular movements of the hand, and agonized gestures, scratches her sheet.

Mr. Liou cuts short these terrible sights by directing our steps to a sort of café, ill-lit, where human wrecks warm themselves as best they can round a stove.

Coolies and beggars form part of the population of our towns and do not add, as one would expect, to their disorganized mobs. Here, and in every town, the coolies obey the unwritten laws, which are extremely severe. You know that the two Chinese characters that express the word coolie are composed of the words *physical pain* and *strength*. A coolie, in fact, sells his strength to the highest bidder. There are numerous categories. First of all there are the stevedore coolies who work at the docks for fifty cents a day, that is about sevenpence-halfpenny for ten hours' hard labour. They rarely eat meat, being satisfied as a rule with rice and vegetables. The push coolies are the best off, because

### *The Minstrels of Hunger*

they are able—not always—to make tenpence-halfpenny. For forty cents they hire their rickshaw for the day from a rickshaw proprietor and work double time—day and night. There are also the Kiao Hang coolies who drag the Chinese wheelbarrows. There have the railway stations exclusively to themselves. Others work on a quayside or for a furniture remover. They are under a chief attached to the Tsing Pang, the Blue Band. When one band tries to encroach upon the preserves of another, it causes bloody battles in which hooks or cudgels are used. At other times they all agree to rifle a gaming-house from which the manager has wished to keep them out. But the coolies are nothing compared with the beggars. They are a living pest—an organized pest which flourishes in all the great towns.

We visited one after the other, some hovels, where silent men seemed to meditate over their misfortune, and stopped at length at a den where Mr. Kiou discovered the man he was looking for. He pointed him out seated at a table surrounded by indescribable people stamped with the seal of misery and despair. They were clothed in rags darned in a hundred places, and worn out by endless washing.

“That man,” said he, “is the *T'oan T'cou*—that is to say, the chief of the beggars of the Chinese town. By chief, I mean the accepted

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master of the army of beggars who act under his orders. He distributes to them their wants. He arranges what they shall do, like the manager of a works, responsible and jealous of his authority. Every day, individuals like those whom you see around here, armed with a stick, sign of mendicity, go out to solicit alms. And every evening they return with their spoils, of which half goes to the chief. Beware of the know-alls and independents who say that begging is a liberal career. Any delinquents would be brought before the *T'oan T'eou* and receive a bastinado. And the beggars use a hard bamboo. . . .

"The man whom you see there, who figures prominently in dramatic fiction, is not at all romantic. He is a business man who knows how to tax the rich and well-to-do bourgeois or wealthy tradespeople. Nobody escapes the taxation by the rascals. Woe to the recalcitrant who replies to the first solicitation:

"'No. . . . I can give nothing. . . . I have my poor.'

"You are forbidden to have other poor than those of *T'oan T'eou*. And he will draw your attention to it by dispatching to the outside of your house or shop a terrible old man, chosen for his loquacity, and, compared with him, those you saw here this evening are elegant Beau Brummels; a repulsive old man who for hours



THE BUDDHA OF THE TEMPLE OF THE  
LAMAS AT PEKIN.



## *The Minstrels of Hunger*

will screech out his plaint or exhibit a terrible maimed limb."

"I have often seen Peking tradesmen give several coppers to beggars who put out their hands."

"They were well advised. I could cite to you the case of a recalcitrant miser who, having abused an old man with horrible wounds, was the object of the vengeance of *T'oan T'eou*. One morning he found in his garden the corpse of a person who had died of consumption that a comrade had placed there to force him—as custom demands—to pay for the coffin and the funeral. But if, on the contrary, you have paid your *obol*, you are immune from future molestation. An unknown hand sticks on your wall a piece of paper, and, thanks to it, other beggars know that they must not worry you further.

"However, it may happen that you celebrate a birth, a marriage or a death. These facts do not pass unnoticed by beggars who, naturally, intervene. It is incumbent upon you that you have a separate table for them in a corner of the courtyard. Sometimes the chief himself sends a delegate, and if you do the thing handsomely, he sees that your guests are not importuned."

"What is the classic formula of the poor who solicit alms?"

"They say: '*Lao yo ki ouo fan tche!*' Which means: 'Old master, give me something

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to eat. . . .’ Old, as you know, being always a flattering epithet. The chief with a stern face whom you see over there, and who looks like an owl surrounded by his fledgelings, is the chief of the sedentary beggars. But there are also mendicant bonzes. They belong to another category. Buddhists or Taoists, they demand subscriptions for their pagoda, whose roof is giving way. They get silver, spend it, and the roof continues to give way. There are, in addition, wandering beggars. They belong to a separate brotherhood—the *Leon Min*. They are the minstrels of hunger—the strolling beggars. In parties, they go from village to village, and to soften the hearts of the inhabitants they exhibit a face gnawed by leprosy, a terrible sore in a filthy condition, a foot swollen by mock elephantiasis. Famine, floods and victims of civil war assure an uninterrupted recruiting of this army of wretched humanity.”

“Missions, American associations and the Chinese authorities, however, come to their assistance.”

“Quite so, but for one poor wretch to whom one gives rice or an old coat, a hundred continue to lead a life which has nothing human about it.”

We went out of the village, leaving the owl and his accomplices to their deliberations. The night air seemed more pure to us after the

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horrible smells of the quarter where life knows nothing but sadness and misery.

On returning to the hotel, about one o'clock in the morning, the porter handed me an urgent note. I recognized the prince's writing. He begged me to come and see him at once at Madame Pao Yu's house in the Street of the Hole in the Elephant's Trunk.

A quarter of an hour later I crossed the threshold of the red door which shut out the deserted *hutung* and found Serge in the drawing-room.

He was alone, poring over a map of China. He satisfied my curiosity immediately.

"Those ladies have suddenly gone off this evening."

"A drama? A quarrel?"

"Nothing of the kind. . . . Gone as scouts. For, to give you the plain fact, I may tell you that my project of selling tanks has fallen to the ground. There is no chance of coming to an understanding with the emissaries of these gentlemen at Kiang-si. Fortunately, another piece of business has cropped up which will need diplomatic handling, but which, if it comes to anything, will be very profitable. It concerns a caravan of opium coming from Burma, across Yun-nan to Kwang-tung."

"What, exactly, do you mean?"

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"This is it. The business will be completed in two parts. First, the finding of the money. We shall have to take a share in the deal with the two Chinese who are financing it. It is necessary to risk forty thousand Mexican dollars. That is Nella's affair, for she still has friends in Shanghai."

"And Madame Pao Yu?"

"Her business is to lessen the risks of transport by negotiating with the customs authorities at Canton and Yun Nan Fou. You follow me? Each of these ladies have their definite parts to play. If the deal succeeds, there will be a profit of three hundred thousand Mexican dollars. A third for us. Two-thirds for our Chinese partners. . . . And naturally, we shall share our hundred thousand dollars into three parts—a third for Nella, a third for Isabella and a third for me."

"But you will have done nothing in the deal."

"Excuse me. . . . I have helped on these ladies who, without me, would have wasted their time at the pedicurist's or in reading novels. Isabella and Nella have taken the express to Shanghai. Nella will stop there to realize her funds, while Isabella will embark on the *Aramis*, of the Messageries Maritimes, en route for Hong Kong and Canton. That is where we shall go if her negotiations mature."

"All the same," I said to the prince, "you

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claim thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three dollars out of this deal. You don't find that you are an expensive stimulant, do you? "

Serge burst out laughing, and with Slav cynicism which is peculiar to him, he exclaimed :

" Ha, ha! Expensive? Me? . . . You know quite well that there are two kinds of males to whom women never think they have paid too much—the man who amuses them and the man who makes them suffer! "



**PART V**  
**CANTON**



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE MIRACLE OF THE OPIUM

JUST as a staphylocoque breeds a boil, so opium breeds hypocrisy. In an assembly of people, as soon as the word opium is uttered, faces grow anxious and eyes drop, conversation ceases, there are whispers, and, if anyone raises his voice, it is to protest as he shakes his head.

Certain Chinese delegates at Geneva have declared recently that *great progress has been made in the suppression of the culture of the poppy and the consumption of opium in China, except in a few limited zones and in the Foreign Concessions.*

On the other hand, it is only fair to pay tribute to the Government of Nankin, that, in July, 1929, passed a law against opium which punished, with five years' imprisonment and five thousand taels fine, the sale or the possession of the drug. Unfortunately, between the theory and the practice there is a gulf that we will try to explore.

Would it not be quite interesting, in view of certain statements made to the League of

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Nations, to show a little more curiosity than these gentlemen at Geneva do, and not to follow the ingenuousness of those delegates travelling in China who were lately led to believe that fields of opium were fields of turnips?

According to the latest information, this is the exact position as to the suppression of the culture of opium in different provinces of the Chinese Republic. First, according to the admission of the Chinese Anti-Opium Society, there exist certain opium monopolies in the provinces of Kiang-su, Kiang-si, Hupeh, Yunnan, Sze-chuen, Shen-si, Ho-nan, Ngan-hwei. In 1932, for example, Marshal Tchang Sue Liang founded in Hupeh, a monopoly in opium under the curious title of "The Company for Collecting Money for Creditors!" Charming euphemism.

In the province of Chihli, at Peking, eleven million ounces of opium are consumed. In order to smoke it, it is necessary to procure an *anti-opium* (!) permit and to pay a tax of five dollars per month per pipe. In Shan-tung, where forty-eight thousand ounces a month are smoked, one pays five dollars an ounce. Honan is liberally sprinkled with poppy-fields. In eight hundred sub-prefectures, one third cultivate a hundred and eighty *mous* of opium. In Shen-si, the drug is so cheap (sixpence for thirty grammes) that fifty per cent. of the inhabitants



A FLEET OF SAMPANS ON THE RIVER OF PEARLS AT CANTON.



## *The Miracle of the Opium*

are opium-takers. The culture is made obligatory by the military authorities, who scoff at threats from Nankin and levy a tax of from ten to forty dollars a *mou*.

In Kiang-su, it is still worse. The culture of opium represents ninety per cent. of the agricultural industry. The annual production of opium there is eighty-four million ounces. All the smokers are registered and pay a tax of five to fifteen dollars per lamp. In Hupeh, the culture is of small importance, but the traffic in narcotics is enormous, with two hundred shops officially recognized. On the other hand, Sze-chuen is, along with Shen-si, one of the greatest producing districts. In 1930 a hundred million ounces were sold and in Chung-king; there were four thousand smokers. The Anti-Opium Association's revenue is about two hundred thousand pounds a month, merely on the rights of transit. In Yun-nan, on one third of the cultivated land, opium is grown. All along the railway from Lao Kay to Yan Nun Fou, I have seen innumerable fields of poppies in flower. One is not surprised, then, that in certain communities ninety-eight per cent. of the men and forty per cent. of the women are smokers.

This, then, in short, is the progress of the suppression of the culture of the poppy in "certain limited zones" to which discreet allusion is made at Geneva.

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But it is said that there are Foreign Concessions which, according to the statements of these gentlemen, are responsible for a great share in the propagation of the evil.

However, the accusation is not justified. Although they are aware of the state of affairs, they know that at the present time at Shanghai Europeans do all they can to help the Chinese Government to put an end to illicit dealing in opium and its substitutes. The participation in it of former days has come to an end! The police of the French Concession in particular have for the last two years taken steps to stop the traffic by every possible means. To quote definite examples. In 1927 there were fifty-two arrests of traffickers. In 1933 more than two hundred and fifty. In 1927 the fines amounted to seventy-five thousand dollars. In 1932 they amounted to more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The same thing has happened in the International Concessions. And what is the result? Contraband effectually stopped in the Concessions is now carried on exclusively in Chinese territory. There has existed since September, 1932, a monopoly in opium granted by the Chinese municipality which controls the largest part of Shanghai. Opium from Hankow is the mostly preferred, because the Nankin Government imposes a tax as the Hupeh opium passes through its territory. The revenues from

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the Chinese monopoly in the Shanghai district amount to three hundred thousand dollars a month. To be quite precise, it is Mr. Liu Tsueng Pou, ex-chief of the judicial section of the Chinese police, who lets out to sub-tenants the monopoly of the collecting of the taxes. But the Provincial Government styles it: *The Department for the Suppression of Opium*. And he has as a technical adviser the celebrated Dou You Seng, ex-Municipal Councillor of Shanghai, whose ability in this respect is unanimously appreciated!

We have, then, before us a particularly instructive spectacle—Nankin passes severe laws against the drug, whilst at the gates of Shanghai, in a province under its direct administration, one can buy anywhere all the opium that one desires in little packets bearing their official stamp. Who, then, is being hoodwinked?

In truth, we are witnessing, in China, the miracle of opium which defies logic, since in the place where it is supposed to be suppressed, its consumption increases; though one is in danger of five years' imprisonment for selling it, one grows rich by dealing in it.

One must have a large amount of credulity to take Mr. Victor Hou's motions at Geneva seriously, especially when he demands closer co-operation between the Chinese authorities and the police of the Concessionaries. They prose-

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

cute the sellers of packets of opium sold openly by the monopoly of the province. Aren't they greater royalists than the King himself? Is it possible to search the million Chinese who go in and out of the Concessions every day?

Some months ago, a cargo coming from the Gate of Persia, unloaded, near Shanghai, thousands of boxes of Persian opium, the finest and most sought-after by smokers. The unloading was carried out under the supervision of the Chinese officials of the Office of Public Welfare. Would the English and French men-o'-war anchored in the Whampoa dare to oppose this traffic and please these gentlemen at Geneva by interfering with the sovereign rights of China?

The unfortunate thing is that opium is a very easy source of profit for a Governor of a Province when his Budget is difficult to balance. What is simpler than to tax a product whose consumption seems so popular with certain people? Mr. Woodhead of Shanghai, who has made a serious study of opium and collected definite data from people from the interior of the country, quotes the reply of a citizen of Cheng-tu, at Sze-chuen, who wrote to him :

“ Opium is taxed four times here: when it is planted, when it is harvested, when it is delivered and when it is smoked.”

## *The Miracle of the Opium*

Better still! In this very Sze-chuen where the culture of opium is *obligatory*, the objectors, those who prefer to cultivate simply cereals or vegetables, are taxed with a duty which is designated as *The Lazy Man's Tax*!

We discussed this difficult problem in the train on the way from Hong Kong to Canton. I had by then made the acquaintance of Mr. Chen Chi Chung, one of Serge's two associates in his new enterprise. For their caravan of opium was well on its way. Thanks to the secret negotiations of the beautiful Madame Pao Yu, the parties concerned were to be fully guaranteed, and thanks to the forty thousand dollars sent from her safe, in fat bundles, by Nella, the necessary amount would be deposited at Canton, or rather, Shameen, in a reliable bank in the French Concession. It only remained for us to find these ladies in the southern capital and to give five thousand dollars in advance to the chief of the caravan.

Mr. Chen Chi Chung interested me exceedingly, because there was nothing concerning opium that he did not know. He was a well-mannered and pleasant gentleman dressed in a grey suit in Hong Kong style, and he certainly had not the appearance of a smuggler.

Whilst the boy was serving us with tea on the

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train, he gave a discreet chuckle as a good story came to his mind, and he said :

“ Never mind ! As regards opium, we got the better of the English.”

“ How ? ”

“ I’ll tell you.”

## CHAPTER XIX

### OPIUM BOOTLEGGERS

MR. CHEN CHI CHUNG sipped his hot tea and began :

“ You remember, no doubt, that His Majesty’s Indian Government agreed in 1906 to stop the importation of opium from Benares to China, on condition that China prohibited the cultivation of the poppy. But as one could not suddenly deprive smokers of their drug, it was arranged that the change should be brought about over a period of ten years. Between 1906 and 1917, the opium-smokers would have time to learn to smoke chocolate cigarettes and the Indians would have time to plant pineapples instead of poppies. As we were gentlemen, we kept our word. In 1917 the delegates who were sent to China reported that opium had disappeared. The English, who were also gentlemen, prohibited the exportation.”

Mr. Chen Chi Chung chuckled with glee.

“ We got what we wanted. We were at last freed from English competition.”

“ And so? ”

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"Well, we planted new fields of poppies, as we had only promised to desist for ten years! You must not rush to unfavourable conclusions regarding my country. Oh! no. . . . We can plead extenuating circumstances."

"What are they? "

"In the first place the Revolution which has—in its very noble aim—disorganized the country and brought about civil war. This fratricide between rival generals has divided the country and hindered the only reasonable solution which, in a united China, would have limited the havoc, if one may say so, and controlled the effects of the evil. Just as many Americans love to drink alcohol, many Chinese love to smoke. So be it! . . . The temporary remedy then was a State monopoly for all China until one could by degrees cure the people of smoking. Take note that I am at the moment speaking as an altruist and not exactly as an egoist who is benefiting from the present state of affairs. A State monopoly, honestly organized, managed even—O height of irony!—by one of the professors of virtue fresh from Europe, like those of the Gabelle or the Customs, would have eased the provincial budgets.

"Instead of that, what has happened? Official Prohibition, like the Volstead Act in America, is religiously disobeyed by everybody and winked at by the Administration. It creates opium bootleggers' business, like ours, and costs the people



VICTIMS OF THE REVOLUTION AT CANTON.



HOW PIRATES ARE PUNISHED IN CHINA.



## *Opium Bootleggers*

dear. The Americans took thirteen years to realize the folly of Prohibition, which corrupted the country and lowered the morality of the guardians of law and order. As everything moves more slowly in China, it will take us at least twenty-five years to rectify our mistake."

Mr. Chen Chi Chung ended on a humorous note:

"Fortunately, between now and then we shall have plenty of time to complete profitable deals with the help of kind friends such as you, monsieur"—he looked towards Serge—"and your honourable lady associates. . . . In the meanwhile, let us bless the orators in Europe who, being blind to the evidence that poppies grow everywhere, prevent the world from knowing the facts and create a false impression from which we should be childish if we did not profit."

"Are there many smokers in China?"

"From forty to fifty millions. So that we see here the same tragi-comedy as in America, where twenty-five million men and women broke the law every evening drinking something stronger than orange juice or gooseberry wine! With the white as well as with the yellow races, the same mistakes have the same effects. We have our Al Capone of opium. Novelists will find inspiration from the opium gangsters."

We were arriving in sight of Canton. Mr. Chen Chi Chung ended by saying:

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"I read yesterday in the newspaper that our great star, Helen Wong, the Chinese Garbo, wanted a divorce from her husband and claims five hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars alimony from him. . . . Just like Hollywood! As I was saying, we are getting a little too Americanized!"

If Shanghai is a yellow New York, Canton is a sort of Chinese Venice. Half its population lives in sampans and junks upon the famous Pearl River, which forms a natural defence to the little isle of Shameen.

Shameen! Tragic memories of 1927, when French sailors fired machine-guns at the hordes of Communists who tried to take possession of the isle—Communists who later submitted to the bloody repression of Li Chi Sen, with mass beheadings, women drawn and quartered, and all the habitual horrors of the country. At the moment, order reigns in Canton, where the municipality has demolished several sordid districts in order to make way for large avenues.

But the charm of Canton is its River of Pearls bubbling with life, dotted with barques and enormous junks, where travellers without any money, temporary galley slaves, pay their passage by ceaselessly walking on the treadmill that works the paddle-wheel.

At night especially, when the light of the

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moon shed its fairy beams upon the black, velvet-like water, peaceful and calm, and the lamps on the quays, like sparkling topazes, twinkled between the funnels of the steamers, nothing could be more interesting than to wander about in search of adventure.

On the evening of our arrival, we dined with Madame Pao Yu at the "New Asia," in a private room. It was a sort of council of war. Serge, the Chinese lady and the two friends played cards, each showing their trump cards.

Madame Pao Yu summed up the mission that had been entrusted to her as follows:

"The two thousand kilos from Benares will, it appears, be brought to the Burma frontier and will go by Ta-li-Fu. The safe journey of the caravan is guaranteed through Yun Nan Fou, the valley of Upper Si-kiang, the Kwang-si and Shao-chow, where our purchasers will accept delivery of the consignment. The greatest difficulty was to be assured of the neutrality of General . . ."

Here, she lowered her voice and whispered a name that the two Chinese associates understood immediately, for they nodded their heads in sign of assent. Then she continued in her ordinary voice:

"Following on Ma's information" (that was the name of the chief of the caravan, a Chinaman of Moslem origin who never had cold feet),

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

“one could not count on buying the general with money. But on the other hand, we were able to win him over by other means. By providential good fortune Ma had learnt that the general, during his short visits to Canton, had fallen in love with a young girl of seventeen who frequented the flower boats under the protection of an old woman—her mother or her amah. After much hesitation, Ma agreed to give me this tip for two hundred and fifty dollars, cash down. I think I acted wisely, gentlemen, in giving the money to him.”

Serge and the two Chinese agreed.

“I took a trip to Shao-chow, where I arranged to meet the general. Getting into touch was much easier than it was for my late husband in 1927 when under his command. In short, my interviews ended in my making an arrangement which, if we carry it out, will remove the last obstacle to the passage of the caravan.”

Madame Pao Yu lit a cigarette and, being very business-like, asked her associates:

“Are you willing to buy Mademoiselle Precious Jade and make a present of her to the general, who is anxious to have her as one of his concubines?”

There was a silence. Mr. Chen Chi Chung put his hands out of his wide sleeves to take his cup of tea.

“Why not?”

## Opium Bootleggers

"It is a matter of price," said Mr. Hsueh, the other associate, prudently.

"Bah!" remarked Serge. "A girl who frequents the flower boats ought not to be beyond our price."

Madame Pao Yu put a damper on the Russian's optimism.

"Don't rush to conclusions, my dear. I have some information regarding that. Ma has tested the ground, if I may say so."

"How much?"

"The mother asks two thousand five hundred dollars!"

Mr. Chen Chi Chung quickly tucked his supple fingers into his sleeves. He looked at Mr. Hsueh with his wrinkled eyes almost shut, betraying his doubts.

"Ma is a fox who means to touch one thousand dollars on the quiet."

"Unless he is an idiot, and has opened his mouth and given the hint to the two women. If they have suspected that the general is the purchaser, they would be sure to raise their price."

"A sing-song girl on a flower boat! . . . Two thousand five hundred dollars! It is idiotic!" exclaimed Serge. "This little girl is worth five hundred dollars according to the prices in 1934. . . . Not a *sapeque* more!"

The two associates had a long discussion with

*Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

Madame Pao Yu whilst Serge called me to witness regarding the pretensions of Made-moiselle Precious Jade.

"In fact, now come! . . . Would you offer twelve thousand five hundred francs?"

I remarked discreetly that I was not the general, nor the purchaser of the concubine. The confab over, Mr. Chen Chi Chung stated to Serge the conclusions they had arrived at.

"Madame and we two are agreed to negotiate the affair and pay one thousand two hundred dollars maximum. We will begin by offering six hundred. . . . I think you also agree? We will let Ma understand that he must use pressure with the mother to make her accept. If not . . ."

"If not, what?"

Very calm, Mr. Chen Chi Chung pointed to his friend and ended simply:

"I mean to say that if Ma makes a mess of it, Mr. Hsueh has the means of making him think as we do. Isn't that so, Mr. Hsueh?"

The third associate did not reply. But he smiled in a cruel way that gave one a cold feeling in the back, a satanic smile which left no doubt about the ferocity of his intentions.

## CHAPTER XX

### FLOWER BOATS

WE left the "New Asia" to look for Mademoiselle Precious Jade. The associates had determined not to lose precious time and to begin their matrimonial negotiations at once. After Ma's information, we had a good chance of meeting the sing-song girl and her mother about eleven o'clock in the evening in the gaming-house on the island, opposite the landing-stage for the steamers from Hong Kong, or on the flower boats which lie anchored on the river near the railway station.

We took a boat up the River of Pearls and went into the casino where the Cantonese play *fantan*. The game is quite simple and needs no complicated paraphernalia—a hundred little pieces of brass, a banker and two croupiers. The banker, with a ruler, separates a packet of brass pieces from the heap which lies at his right hand. He counts them four by four. At the end there will remain a little heap of four, three, two, one or

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

zero pieces. The players who have bet on the winning number get three times and a half their stake. One can play at the same time on the ground floor and on the first floor by means of a practical opening in the ceiling which allows you, behind a balustrade, to follow the gaming from above.

The croupier on the first floor sends down the bets in a little basket on the end of a string.

Whilst Ma was looking for the sing-song girl, we played *fantan*, surrounded by Cantonese families, who watched us with curiosity. My neighbour was a young mamma, munching peanuts, holding in her arms a little fellow three years old: she had to tear herself away from her prognostications in order to attend to the child, making him squat on a large brass spittoon between two of the gaming tables. But the most amazing thing was the extraordinary ability of the old croupier on the ground floor who, before his patron had begun to count the fifty or sixty little pieces on the cloth, announced without ever making a mistake that four, three, two or one should be left.

Ma at length came to tell us that Mademoiselle Precious Jade had already gone to the flower boats. We got into our sampan again, and under the vigorous oarsmanship of the woman who worked whilst her man slept, we descended the dark river. There were lights round the



PACKETS OF OPIUM SOLD OFFICIALLY IN CHINA.



## *Flower Boats*

great junks anchored on either side. There were courtesans' pontoons whose black hulks stood out against the starry sky, whilst the flower boats anchored near Shameen are only little sampans with roofs, under the shelter of which two or three painted girls await a laggard client.

We boarded this isle of pontoons whence came the sound of songs, and, preceded by Ma, we crossed several boats lashed together side by side. In one, women and young girls were playing mah-jongg. In another, some men were paying their polite addresses to girls, whilst from the first floor came the merriment and spasmodic laughter of a love-song.

At last we discovered Mademoiselle Precious Jade and her mother in an alcove on the third pontoon. The little Cantonese was well-made and pretty. Lolling on a dingy sofa, she got up to greet the visitors and seemed surprised at the presence of Madame Pao Yu.

We crowded into the small room, under the acetylene lamp. Serge's two associates talked pleasantly with the young girl dressed in rose silk beautifully embroidered, whilst Ma, in the ante-room, talked to the mother in a low voice.

It was not surprising that the general was taken with Mademoiselle Precious Jade, her tea-rose complexion, her black hair tied in knots behind her head, her little dainty hands and her modest manner suggested nothing of the cunning

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

courtesan. She would make a charming concubine and certainly would not be discreditable to his collection.

I shall never forget the first hour that we passed in her alcove, for the negotiations lasted a long time. Madame Pao Yu explained everything to Serge, and Serge, every quarter of an hour, recounted to me the position of affairs.

"When Ma proposed six hundred dollars, the mother very nearly tried to throw him overboard."

"How much is she asking?"

"One thousand eight hundred dollars, not a dollar less."

"And the young lady?"

"She has no say in the matter. Her adopted mother—for it appears that she bought her for fifty dollars in 1928 from a widow whose husband was beheaded at Canton during the Red Massacre—pretends that she has refused two thousand dollars from a Chinese Hong Kong banker. . . . Look! . . . Here comes Chen Chi Chung to take over the merchandise; we shall get the latest report."

To judge by the serious face of the associate, the mother must have been difficult to persuade, for they all got up and we said good-bye to the two ladies. We went on to another pontoon, where we sat down to tea brought to us by a pleasant sing-song girl who would certainly have

## *Flower Boats*

agreed to sell herself at a cheaper price and at once.

"It is annoying," Serge explained to me. "The mother insists on getting seventeen hundred dollars because Mademoiselle Precious Jade is a maiden. . . . And these gentlemen will not budge beyond one thousand. . . . Seven hundred pieces of silver, it is a great difference."

"The negotiations are broken off?"

"No. Nothing is ever broken off here. But we shall be here half the night before they go up two hundred dollars and she comes down five hundred. . . ."

"Where is Ma?"

"He has gone back to see the mother. Thanks to this kindly agent, the two contracting parties are able to negotiate without losing face. A Fu-kien proverb says: 'The cunning rabbit has three chances of escape from the terrier.' Ma is our third chance."

About one o'clock in the morning, Ma reappeared, to take Mr. Chen Chi Chung aside. There is no chance of getting her under fifteen hundred dollars. Then Mr. Chen Chi Chung went away with the silent and formidable Mr. Hsueh, who made a commanding sign to Ma. The two men immediately disappeared. Then Mr. Hsueh came back alone and explained in a low voice:

"Ma has gone back to negotiate. He still

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

wishes to make too much out of the deal. I have given him to understand that if he does not pull it off, he will die accidentally between Ta-li-Fu and Shao-chow. He did not ask any details regarding the accident. He quite understood."

Serge intervened with:

"But maybe it is not entirely Ma's fault after all."

"Quite so," added Mr. Hsueh. "I have authorized him to make a serious suggestion to the mother of Mademoiselle Precious Jade."

"What is that?"

"To inform her that if she does not accept our terms, the same accident which will cost Ma his life will send her to join her ancestors in the Great Beyond."

Without wishing to dramatize the scene, we were persuaded that Mr. Hsueh was not bluffing. As we were walking together on the pontoons, Serge impressed upon me the seriousness of his threats.

"Our associate, Hsueh, who has the appearance of a little quiet and reserved official, is a specialist in . . . accidents. He is one of the most scrupulous bootleggers in opium that I know. Others do not hesitate to bump off their rivals in a rough and ready manner. He does it in a more suave manner. Haven't you heard how, one day, he got rid of a rival without any



A COVERED BRIDGE AT POUO HSHI  
(YUN-NAN).



COURTESANS AT CANTON RECEIVE VISITORS ON  
THEIR FLOWER BOATS.



## *Flower Boats*

scruple? The simplest way possible, thanks to an unloaded revolver. He showed him a new revolver, and the gentleman, in trying it, was killed . . . accidentally. Was it Mr. Hsueh's finger or that of his enemy which pressed the trigger? And the incident of the swallow's nest and the ground glass? . . . Don't you know about that? A glass was accidentally broken in the dish and the guest died, by bad luck, of peritonitis. I'll tell you! If you are Mr. Hsueh's enemy, never look into a well when he is close to you. There are two things to be found at the bottom of a well—truth or death."

Towards two o'clock in the morning, we learnt that the basis of an agreement had been arrived at in consideration of the sum of twelve hundred dollars. We came to the conclusion that the fear of . . . an accident had been instrumental in bringing about that agreement. That was quite possible, after all; perhaps it had even stimulated Ma's intelligence! For, during the later interviews, he had brought things to a head by suddenly asking the mother under what sign she was born.

"I was born in the year of the monkey," she replied.

Then Ma played upon the superstition so dear to many Chinese—relative to the twelve animals of the cycle, knowing the enmity of the horse for the ox, the rat for the goat, the dog for the cock,

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

the serpent for the tiger, the rabbit for the dragon and the monkey for the pig.

"You are born in the year of the monkey and the general is born in the year of the horse. A disagreement is impossible. On the contrary, you will be well treated by him as regards the girl and you will benefit from her good luck."

The argument carried the point. We returned to Shameen satisfied at having concluded an arrangement by which the happiness of Mademoiselle Precious Jade had benefited. We left her quite unmoved—at least outwardly. But would she not dream that night of the future which henceforth would smile on her, and of the day near at hand when, in the general's *yamen*, she, the new favourite, would lord it with her jewels of great price and heavy necklaces, which would show off the pale-rose tint of her satin skin?

**PART VI**  
**YUN NAN FOU**



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE CARAVAN PASSES

It was with light hearts that, three weeks later, we set out for Yun-nan, where Serge and his associates had to watch over the passage of their opium caravan. All was in order, including the free delivery of the powder and paint of the pretty little concubine.

The general, touched by this delicate attention, had offered at Shao-chow a dinner of ninety dishes to his generous donors, and had promised formally that their precious cargo would not be pillaged on its journey.

At the end of the feast, Mademoiselle Precious Jade got as tight as a fiddler to celebrate the historic date of her wedding night.

The journey from Hanoi to Yun Nan Fou was enjoyable and picturesque. One knows that this railway, unique in the whole world, does great credit to the French engineers who built it between 1901 and 1910. It needed, in truth, great audacity to construct, in this chaotic and

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

inaccessible district, a line which in four hundred and sixty-five kilometres needs one hundred and seven viaducts, one hundred and seventy-eight tunnels, and an enormous suspension bridge between two sheer cliffs which crosses the treacherous Nam Ti three hundred feet above its bed.

The Yun-nan Railway has a peculiarity that is not to be found on the P.L.M., the South-Eastern Railway or the C.P.R.—a marble slab at Yi-leang station put up by the inhabitants to the memory of the station-master. Not that this working man was killed fighting against the Japanese! Promoted to the important station of Ami Tcheou, he had to leave his fellow-townsmen who, to express their appreciation of him and their regret at his departure, erected a tablet. This is the exact wording of the inscription:

“OUR DEAR MR. TCHANG YE SEN, ORIGINALLY FROM CANTON, OF A NOBLE FAMILY, IS THE STATION-MASTER AT YI-LEANG. WITH ENERGY AND SERIOUSNESS, HE CONDUCTS THE BUSINESS IN HIS OWN WAY AND TRIES ALL HE CAN TO AVOID ANY ACCIDENTS THAT ONE WISHES TO PERPETRATE [SIC]. TRULY MR. TCHANG IS ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS-MINDED STATION-MASTERS. ALSO MERCHANTS FROM FAR-OFF PLACES ARE HAPPY TO COME TO YI-LEANG WHEN

## *The Caravan Passes*

THE COUNTRY THRIVES. HE HAS BEEN HERE FOR TEN YEARS. IN ORDER NOT TO FORGET HIS GOOD WORK, WE CAN DO NO MORE THAN ERECT A STONE MEMORIAL AND ENGRAVE UPON IT FELICITATIONS, SOME OF WHICH HE DESERVES [SIC]. IT IS A GOOD LESSON FOR THOSE WHO WILL BE STATION-MASTERS TO IMITATE MR. TCHANG. . . . ERECTED SPRINGTIME, 1932, BY THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE."

The railway employers in France will be glad to see that in China, on a French-built railway, they know how to honour conscientious station-masters, instead of singing in the coaches hymns hostile to their happiness at home.

*"Le chef de gare il est cocu, etc."*

At Yun Nan Fou, the residence of the Governor, General Yun Lang, a man of determination who mastered the pirates and kept order in his province, I left Serge to occupy himself in his affairs and went to visit the pagodas in the district.

Nella accompanied me through the mountain forest of Si Chan to Tai Hoa Sen, to the Temple of the Immense Flower Garden. We were, in fact, surrounded by marvellous vegetation, a dazzling array of scarlet camelias and white and mauve giant magnolias. Nella seemed to be preoccupied. She explained that she was not

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

worried regarding the forty thousand dollars she had speculated in the opium, but because Serge's affections seemed to be more and more under the pernicious influence of Madame Pao Yu.

"I thought," I said to her, "that you had made a treaty of peace with the beautiful Chinese lady. Since the sharp warning that you gave us at Shanghai, when we imagined that a dramatic scene was about to be enacted, we have seen you, particularly at Nankin and Peking, like sisters united by unbreakable bonds of affection."

"You know very well that there was nothing sincere about that. She has determined to take Serge from me and she is awaiting her opportunity. Unfortunately, we are both interested in a difficult enterprise, and I don't know what to do. If I withdrew my support, apart from the amount I shall lose, I shall be instrumental in making him lose his share, and I know that she will be very annoyed, because she loves Serge, but she also loves his dollars. On the other hand, Serge would never forgive me for having caused him to lose a goodly sum, and he would be capable of breaking with me. . . . I am indeed very perplexed."

"Your case offers only two possible solutions: either Serge is really in love with Madame Pao Yu, and whatever you do, he will deceive you—if you withdraw, you will lose at the same time both your friend and your money—or maybe

### *The Caravan Passes*

it is the Chinese lady who loves him and it appeals to his male vanity. In that case could you control matters? . . . ”

“ You forget death. ”

“ That’s true. There is murder and suicide. You don’t want to kill yourself by jumping from the top of Si Chan into the lake of Yun Nan Fou? ”

“ No. I was not referring to my own death. ”

“ Take care. If you do away with Madame Pao Yu, you will not get any assistance from your consul, because you have a Chinese passport. The jails in Yun-nan are not very comfortable. ”

A flash of jealousy shone in Nella’s black eyes.

“ You forget Mr. Hseuh, who is an expert in . . . accidents, and who for some time has been paying me discreet attention. ”

“ Come! You are talking wildly. . . . In any case, do not invite me to dinner when Mr. Hseuh is going to offer Madame Pao Yu swallows’ nests with ground glass sauce! ”

We went down to the lake and got into a sampan which took us to the Ta Kouan Lou Restaurant, and there was no further talk of vengeance. The next day, we paid a visit to the Yun Nan Fou Museum, near the Pagoda of Confucius, where side by side with the precious relics lie European children’s mechanical toys

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

that have recently been prize-winners at the Lépine Show. Then Nella took me to the Pagoda of Tortures. Naturally, the frescoes of this temple, which illustrate the hellish tortures of the Chinese, stimulated afresh her vindictiveness, and she took the opportunity of praising the imagination of Mr. Hsueh, the expert in fatal "accidents."

On the way back, Serge confessed to me the nervousness that the topazine's attitude of mind caused him.

"As one says in English, I am skating on thin ice. . . . I am, at the moment, between a lioness that is watching me and a panther that is after me. I wish I were six weeks older."

"To know which will win, the lioness or the panther?"

"No. To be able to pocket my share of the booty when the caravan reaches Shao-chow."

I left without learning the epilogue of the affair, Yun Nan Fou, its temples, its lake and its peach-trees in flower which surrounded it at that time with a purple garland. The train took me towards the tropical regions of the Valley of Nam Ti, well known for its fever forests, and in crossing the frontier between Hokow and Lao-kai, I said good-bye to China.

Two months later, after having passed through Indo-China and Cambodia, I was surprised to



A MAIO-TZE WOMAN AT YUN-NAN.



### *The Caravan Passes*

find at Singapore two edifying cablegrams. The first came from Canton :

*"If you know Serge's address, send it by return. Stop. Serge disappeared ten days ago. Am distracted. Thanks. Nella."*

The second came from Manilla :

*"After satisfactory conclusion of business, I have come away without leaving an address. Stop. The lionesses roar, the caravan gets through. Stop. Hope to see you one day and have cocktail celebration. Cordially, Serge."*

I could not resist placing side by side these two messages which completed the adventure of my travelling companions in China. Between the lines of these telegraphic communications the faces of Serge, Nella, Madame Pao Yu already began to fade into the distant past. It only needed a message from the Chinese lady with the dark velvety eyes for the trio to be complete. But she alone kept silence. She had already shut herself in the drawer along with the souvenirs where all that remained of her was a portrait and a little poem to the autumn moon that she had written one evening on the menu at a restaurant in Peking, wielding her black brush with unforgettable charm.

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

Suddenly, the walk to the Temple of the Immense Flower Garden came back to my mind. Nella and I had forgotten one eventual solution of her sentimental imbroglio. Serge's cablegram from Manilla suggested it to me. Did it not corroborate once more that the greatest victory in love lies in flight?

**PART VII**  
**SINGAPORE**



## CHAPTER XXII

### WHITHER GOES CHINA?

AND now China, that invertebrate colossus, is fading away in the wake of the *Felix Roussel*, the luxurious liner of the Messageries Maritimes. It is necessary to conclude. But perhaps one can never conclude where the future of China is concerned. What can one say of a prodigious country where one meets syndicalist workers at Shanghai according to the *cégétiste* orthodoxy and *Red Lances* and *Big Swords* at a hundred kilometres from the Concessions?

What can one say of a country where, in spite of the warnings of Nankin, one meets still in the interior millions of women with deformed feet, whilst on the coast one sees normal feet dancing, in Louis XV heels, the last blues from America?

In China, you strike against contrasts every day at the corner of every street. In Canton, you find running water in the best Chinese hotel in the town. But in Yun Nan Fou, there are travelling *lavabos* at the side of the footpath, with a public toothbrush—that is to say, for the

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

use of passers-by who, for two *sapeques*, can hire a dirty towel and the said brush, worn to the bone.

One could safely offer a million dollars to the clairvoyant who could prophesy with exactitude what will happen in China in the next fifty years. Ask the Chinese best qualified to reply; they will not be able to say anything definite. Statesmen and other important people have told me :

“ The first duty of China is to suppress Communism before thinking of national reconstruction. We mean by that : the suppression of outlaws who, under the Red ticket and the orders of Moh Tse Tung and Chu Teh, rob and levy ransoms upon the unfortunate people living under their rule. For you can question the peasant of the Kiang-si and ask him what he knows of Marxism and class-hatred. He will confess his ignorance, but will add that provincial officials are worse than bandits. So of the two evils he chooses the less.”

Armed force against the Reds is necessary. But that should only be the advance guard of a total remodelling of the administration and the sign of war against corruption—that cancer which eats into the body of China. If not, disintegration will be rapid. The Japanese are already masters of the north-east provinces, a stretch of country as large as France, Italy and Switzerland.

### *Whither Goes China?*

The gigantic problem which presents itself to the soothsayers of Kuomintang is this: Shall we allow China to be nibbled at in Manchuria, Sin-kiang, Thibet, Mongolia, not to mention the civil war at Ning-hia amongst the Reds. Can we resist with our exhausted China? and our internal squabbles, our Byzantine quarrels and the rivalries of our egotistical politicians who are jealous of their position?

It is a serious problem which ought to inspire salutary reflexions to the Wang Ching Wei and the Hou Han Min of the party. The Kuomintang has, with a light heart, assumed the direction of China's destiny. Well, will it show that it is capable of carrying out its promises, and will it put an end to internal strife, or ought it to give way and yield up his position to others?

One cannot say that the task of the Koumintang is easy. To govern four hundred millions of Chinese is like wishing to put the continent of Europe under the control of one government.

Mr. Eugène Chen, ex-rebel of Fu-kien who, in December last, realized to his cost that he had put his money on the wrong horse, saw the safety of China in federation as opposed to excessive centralization at Nankin. He says that China, with her area and her immense population, cannot be governed as a single state, with five *Yuans* set up by Nankin. But if this system were theoretically satisfactory, it would be practically

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

inapplicable in such an immense tract of country that will not build a network of railroads, so that the archaic mode of life and limited outlook of the village folk cannot be transformed.

For we are not forgetting that the Nationalist Party, the spiritual heir of Sun Yat Sen, instituted a period of political apprenticeship of six years to educate the Chinese people and prepare them for exercising their sovereign powers.

O sweet Utopia! . . . What an illusion of short-sighted democrats who expected to transform, in six years, a nation which for three thousand years has lost any desire to concern itself with the outside world! A vote given to the Sze-chuen peasants? Perhaps, if he were to believe in its efficacy. But not for another century.

One can sum up the dangers that lie ahead of China as follows:

First. Civil wars between rival generals, jealous of their prerogatives and their material possessions.

Second. The ruin of citizens oppressed by Governors hastening to enrich themselves before the turn of the wheel of fortune deprives them of their revenues.

Third. The general financial crisis, the result of bad government, which paralyses commerce and industry.

Fourth. Foreign interference, the logical

### *Whither Goes China?*

result of civil wars that have gone on too long.

The Chinamen who have studied history in our European universities would have the right to reply :

“ Why do our civil wars justify foreign interference? How many European nations would have been dismembered by their neighbours if these latter had made this a pretext for interfering in what did not concern them? Do not forget that the political structure and the organization of China have proved themselves for several centuries when China was free from all Western interference. What is the good of this excessive centralization, necessary, perhaps, in your constricted Europe, but useless in China, so huge that no one interferes with it in the interior? It is you who are responsible for our present crisis, you, the barbarians of the West, with your imitators, the Japanese, who yelp at our doors like hungry dogs at a tempting butcher's shop. All of you who criticize, forget what we have done in ten years. . . . Ten years! . . . It is but a minute in the history of China! Revolution in France continues. And you expect Sun Yat Sen and the executors of his will to act more rapidly.”

What reply can we give to the Chinese who put forward these reasonable remarks?

The process of the unification of China, follow-

### *Confucius in a Tail-Coat*

ing logically the pressure from the Western civilization, will, in the near future, be menaced in two ways: maybe by the Japanese, whose appetite is whetted after their success in Manchuria; maybe by the Communists, who will know how to resist with success the attacks of the Central Government and Sovietize eighty million Chinese. And it is not even impossible to see the realization of these two dangers at the same time, which will bring face to face, on Chinese soil, Russia and Japan. And this conflict, this time unavoidable, will lead to a general conflagration in the Far East.

**END**

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